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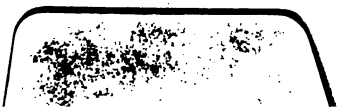
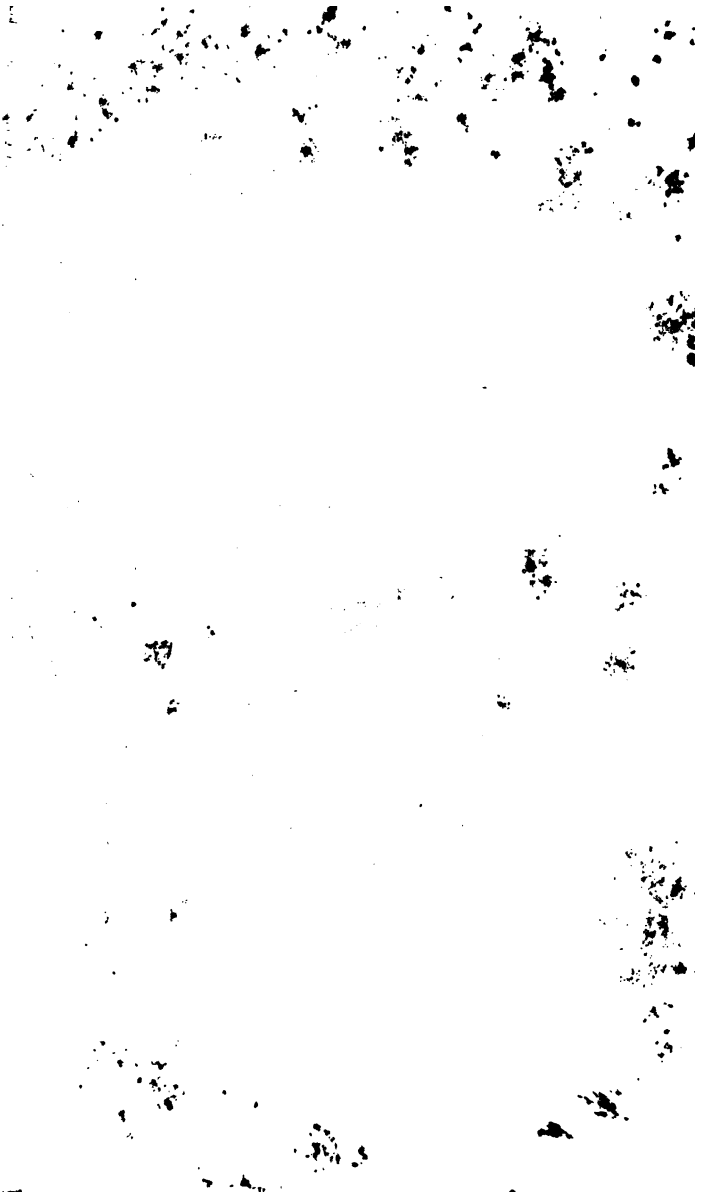
THE CHILDREN'S HOUR





CHILDREN AND HOUSES.—CHILDREN'S HOUR, p. 1.
(*Frontispiece.*)

THE

CHILDREN'S HOUR

TALKS TO YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT HOUSES, FLOWERS, SHIPS, BOOKS, ETC.

BY

CHARLES BRUCE

AUTHOR OF "THE STORY OF A MOSS ROSE," "MY BEAUTIFUL HOME," "LAME FELIX," "NOBLE MOTTOES," "THE BOOK OF NOBLE ENGLISHWOMEN," ETC.

WITH A PREFACE BY THE

REV. E. PAXTON HOOD

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA JUL 1878

"A pause in the day's occupations,
That is known as the children's hour."

WILLIAM P. NIMMO
LONDON AND EDINBURGH
1878

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TO

JOHN LINCOLNE, Esq.,

AS A SLIGHT BUT VERY HEARTY EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE

FOR VERY MANY KINDNESSES,

THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE Author of this little volume requests me to introduce it to the reader by two or three words of preface. Many of the following addresses first appeared in a periodical which I, for a short time, edited, the *Preacher's Lantern;* it was designed to assist those who in any way cultivate the art of useful public speech, and one of the most useful departments of that art, and one of the most difficult of attainment, is the power to interest, really and honestly, the minds and hearts of children. The Children's Pulpit has seldom been very well filled. Lively sympathy, ready illustration, apt, pertinent, and witty remark, and perfect reality, are all more necessary than in addresses to elder folk. Children are not easily stiffened and starched into the conventional rigidity of back-board behaviour and pew propriety; the attention they give must be honestly won; and, at

the same time, it is not the less a duty to give to the address material which may solidly benefit as well as naturally entertain. The Author of this little volume possesses, in a considerable degree, all the attributes to which I have referred, and I am very certain that a slight glance through the following pages will show that they may do good service in many Sabbath-schools, and many others than children may read them or hear them with interest; for it is very true that for the average mind of a congregation the most captivating talk to children will also be the most interesting to men and women; we over-estimate the degree to which the child has been outlived and outgrown in all our congregations. I give to this little volume my very hearty and loving word, because with much freshness of feeling and fancy, it shows much earnestness of purpose and simplicity of style. I think it ought to be useful, and I pray that it may be so.

EDWIN PAXTON HOOD.

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THE CHILDREN'S HOUR.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDREN AND HOUSES.

"All the building fitly framed together."—EPH. ii. 21.

YOU all know what a house is. You see one every day; you live in one; you make it your home; it protects you from the wind, the rain, and the cold. Had you no house in which to shelter yourself during the inclement months of winter, you would perish, you would starve with cold, you would die from exposure. I have sometimes thought that each one of you, each girl, each boy, is like a house, is in fact a complete little house in herself or in himself. I will tell you why it is I think that girls and boys are like houses.

When a newly-built and completely-finished house makes its first appearance in the world, how bright

and fresh it is. Walking along the road, or in the street where it stands, it would immediately attract your attention, and you would say, "See, there is a new house!" No one would mistake it for an old one—with its fresh paint, its clean windows, and its highly-varnished door; for time has not as yet made the traces of his fingers visible upon it, the wind and the rain have not dimmed its freshness, or the sun blistered its paint; dirt and smoke have not sullied its purity. It is clean and new as it came from the hand of the builder. So with a boy or a girl fresh from the hand of the great Master Builder; if with capacities for all the sins and infirmities of man, yet how fair, how bright, how full of light and sunshine; no one would take them to be old, for labour has not wasted their frames, care wrinkled their cheeks, or sorrow dimmed the brightness of their eyes, and the mire of passion and sin have not sullied the sweetness of their purity.

But a house consists of more than the four outside walls and the roof; it is divided into distinct and separate compartments, which we call rooms; there is the parlour, the drawing-room, the bedrooms, and the kitchen. So, likewise, the body of each girl and each boy is something more than the outside; like the house it is divided into distinct and separate *rooms.* There is the *mind* room, the *heart* room,

the *soul* room, and other rooms concerning which it is not now necessary to speak. And as each room in the house is set apart for a distinct purpose, the bedroom in which to sleep, the parlour in which to sit during the day, and the kitchen in which to cook, so the rooms of the body are each set apart for a particular service. In the mind room you can sit and think; in the heart room you can sit and feel and love; in the soul room you can sit and aspire.

It would be almost an act of unpardonable folly if, having rooms in a house, they were never used for the purpose for which they were intended; but how much greater would be the folly and the sin if, having rooms in your body, you never put them to any use whatever. Each boy and girl should make it a duty—and what is first done as a duty is soon done for love—to use each one every day and continually. Go into the mind room and there think; you will find no end of things to think about; you can, for instance, think of the wonderful structure of your own body; so wonderful is it that a poet-king of old exclaimed, "O Lord, I am fearfully and wonderfully made!" But never let your thoughts rest merely upon the thing itself, let them travel from the thing made to Him who made it, to God who fashioned you, gave you infinite capacities for good, for suffering, and for sorrow, and has given you the power of turning them all to account.

From the mind room you can step into the heart room, where you treasure up your affections and your loves; there your affections can shoot out and entwine themselves round a father, a mother, a sister, a brother, or a friend; and by doing this, you lay up for yourself light, sunshine, and happiness for cloudy and dark days.

Then there is the soul room, the room which is never to be destroyed; like the fireproof room of a house, which fire cannot destroy, neither can water injure, and which will survive the destruction of the very house itself; so likewise your soul room cannot be injured or destroyed. It is to last for ever. In this room you can hold communion with your heavenly Father, you can strive after Him, aspire to be perfect as His Son was perfect, that is, perfect in obedience to the Divine will.

Again. A house is of no use, nor any of its rooms, if an entrance cannot be gained; consequently it has one or more doors through which it can be entered, and even in cases of emergency an entrance can be effected through the windows. In like manner the bodily house of each boy and girl can be entered by doors and windows. You have *mouth* door, and *ear* door, and two windows you call eyes. Through these each room can be visited, and are constantly *visited every day* and every night. Grand old John

Bunyan compared man's body to the walls of a beleaguered city, and what I have called doors and windows he named gates.

But a house is intended for something more than a mere building, with doors, windows, and rooms. It is meant as a place in which to live, a dwelling-place. So, on a certain day, furniture is moved into it; the floors are covered with carpets, pictures are hung round the walls; tables, chairs, and sofas are arranged; bedsteads put up, and curtains suspended from the windows. Thus furnished and decorated, the family enter—the husband, father and master; the wife and mother; the children and the servants. The master is the head of the family; he it is who regulates the household. He says to one servant, "Do this," and he doeth it; and to this one, "Go," and he goeth; and to a third, "Come," and he cometh. The wife looks up to him for counsel, the children love to obey him, the servants haste to do his bidding. Order and harmony prevail throughout the house, because all are wisely ruled, all feel they have a share in the master's love. The wife sees him not as a master, but as a loving husband; the children only know him as an affectionate father; the servants acknowledge him as master, but also as one who is considerate for their welfare and comfort.

Now what are the names of the different members

that take up their abode in the bodily house of each girl and boy? First, there is Conscience. Conscience is the head of the family, and rules, or should rule, every other member. Then come Desire, Idea, Thought, and Hope, all of which are members of the family, each one occupies a portion of the house. But recollect that Conscience must rule over them all, or there will be no peace and harmony, all will be contention and discord; it will be as bad as if wife, children, and servants quarrelled with the head, the master of the house. The one who is in authority must be obeyed, or all peace is at an end.

Again. The house may be broken into. There are certain men in the world who think that a house is not only made to live in, but also made to be broken into. There are thieves in the world, who go prowling about the streets, always on the watch to see if they cannot enter a house without detection, and rob it of its valuables. Sometimes they effect their purpose in broad daylight; but the night is their favourite time; "They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." So, before he retires to rest, the master of the house sees that the shutters are up at the windows, and the doors securely barred and bolted; and if, in spite of these precautions, the thieves effect an entrance, he does his best to capture *them and hand them* over to justice to be punished

It is just so with each girl and boy: you must guard well each doorway and window, that no thieves, in the shape of bad thoughts, bad passions, bad desires, enter in; you must bar them out. If they do get in, drive them out again, make them prisoners, or they will taint and soil the good thoughts in your mind room, the pure affections in your heart room, the holy love in your soul room; they will try to rob you of them all. "Watch, for you know not at what hour the thief cometh."

The house may catch fire. Let the master of a house take whatever precaution he may, sometimes, either through neglect, or carelessness, or wilfully by some person from without, his house catches fire. Instantly the whole neighbourhood is in a state of excitement. All the neighbours flock round the house to watch the progress of the flames. Presently the fire-engines make their appearance, and the men set earnestly to work to throw water upon the flames to extinguish them. But the flames seem to gain the mastery in spite of every effort. And why? Because the men cannot find the primary or principal seat of the fire; they can't get at it, so their labour seems fruitless. In the midst of the excitement it is discovered that some one is in one of the upper rooms! He is seen at the window! He has tried to make his escape by the staircase, but finds it burnt and

fallen away! He opens the window, and shouts, "Help! help! help!" Who can help him? Is there any hope? Yes, see, coming round the corner of the street is the fire-escape, pushed along by willing and eager hands. It is placed against the wall, just beneath the window; up mounts the fireman, and amid shouts of applause the man is saved.

Sometimes in the history of a boy or girl, in a moment of negligence, a bad passion creeps into the heart room, and there smoulders and burns, setting the whole room on fire. This bad fire affects the body, makes it restless, fevered, and burning hot. The physician comes and drenches the body with medicine. Yet the fire is not quenched! He cannot get at the root of the fire. The patient is in danger of being consumed. In his emergency and pressing danger he recollects One who said, "My arm is not shortened that I cannot save;" One who said He was "able to save to the uttermost all those who called upon Him;" One who said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will hear thee." Recollecting this, he cries earnestly, "Lord, save me; or I perish." Instantly the all-powerful and loving Saviour runs to the rescue, and with that grand fire-escape the cross, takes him in His arms and conveys him far from danger.

Again. *It sometimes* happens that all the family

are assembled in the parlour at the "gloaming," in the soft twilight time, ere the gas is turned on or the candles lit. All are nestling together on the hearth-rug in front of the fire. In the stillness of this dreamy time they are startled by hearing a knock at the door! Who can it be? "Do not go," says the master of the house; "it is only a beggar!" And some one shouts down the passage, "Mary Jane, do not open the door, it is only a beggar!" Again, and yet again, the knock is heard. "It may be a friend," one suggests. "Never mind, the door shall not be opened!" After a time the knocking ceases, the applicant has grown weary and has gone away. Or it may be that this knocking comes in the night, when the master of the house is in bed; he has put out the candle, and all is dark, and hushed, and still; yet he cannot sleep. Suddenly he is startled by hearing a loud, distinct knock at the door! He listens. Yes, the knock is repeated. "Perhaps it is a friend come to tell me good news! But I can't get out of my warm bed to let him in."

Knock! knock! knock!

"Perhaps some one is perishing for want of shelter; but I can't get up to let him in."

Knock! knock! knock!

He throws the bedclothes over his head, that he may not hear. He knows no one else can open the

door, for he has the key, lying on a chair by his bedside. The knocking is over, whoever it was has grown weary, and gone away. My dear boys, my dear girls, there is some One constantly knocking at the door of your hearts, some One who has said, "Behold I stand at the door and knock." Conscience hears the knock, and, startled, says, "I must open the door!" up springs fiery Passion and says, "No, you shall not." Again the knock is heard; "I really must open," says Conscience. Up springs evil Desire, and says, "No, you shall not." Again sounds the knock; "I think I will open," says Conscience. Up springs bad Habit and Sin, and together they shout, "No, you shall not." And Conscience, like a coward, shrinks back, afraid to burst through the circle and let the supplicant in. Oh, never, never let this be the case with you, my dear children; rather stand ready, with hand upon the handle of the door, to throw it open at the first summons. Let your earnest cry and prayer be:

"Knock, Saviour, knock, I ready stand
To open wide the door,
To entertain my heavenly Guest
In joy for evermore."

Once more, and only once. There comes a time in the history of every house when it stands empty; *when the tenants* have left the house to crumble into

ruin and decay. You look in at the windows, but the rooms are all empty. You listen at the door, which is left carelessly open, but you hear no sound:

> "In the window is no light,
> And no sound is at the door,
> So frequent on its hinge before."

So there comes a time in the history of every boy and girl, when their bodily house will be empty; when the windows will be darkened, the door no more opened and shut, and the rooms emptied of their living motives, and hopes, and ideas, and thoughts.

Where has the family gone? Some families go out in the open day, to occupy a larger house. Some families hurry out at night in the darkness, not knowing whither they are going, only anxious to flee, because their landlord has threatened them with imprisonment. My dear children, how will it be with you when you leave your bodily house? Will you flee out in the night, in darkness and in terror? Oh no, no, I trust and pray not; I earnestly hope you will go out with the sure hope of taking up your abode in that house of which our Saviour said, "In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you."

CHAPTER II.

LESSONS FROM THE SUN.

"The Lord God is a sun."—Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

I NEED scarcely ask you whether you have ever seen the sun; you cannot fail to have done so, if you have made use of the eyes God has given you; it is too prominent an object, and plays too important a part in the affairs of the earth on which we live, and among the heavenly bodies, to remain unnoticed. You doubtless know that by its attractive power this round world of ours is held suspended in its place in the universe, and with other planets moves in its orbit round it. Our earth would fall into darkness and ruin, just as we sometimes say we see a star fall—though this is not the case—if this attractive power was for a moment withdrawn.

It is one of the grandest objects the eye can look upon, the sun in its glory; in all ages poets have *sung its* praises. Doubtless the sweet singer of Israel,

the poet-king, when a shepherd lad among his father's sheep, had often watched it in the early morning, issuing forth from its chambers in the east; had seen it in its full splendour and power at noon time; while his eye had lingered entranced upon the golden glories of its setting. He knew it was God who

> "the golden tressèd sun
> All day caused his course to run."

And he saw how the earth rejoiced in its presence, how it gave gladness to both man and beast, how the trees budded in its genial warmth, and how the flowers expressed in beauty their joy for its light. He saw all this, and his mind, rising far above the sun, fixed itself upon its Maker, the God of his nation —Jehovah, beneath whose smile his country prospered, and his nation became great and mighty. Then, as such thoughts filled his mind, we may conceive him seizing his harp, and, sweeping his hand across its musical strings, giving utterance to that jubilant shout, "The Lord God is a sun."

Let us, you and I, children, think of a few things which the sun does for our earth, then we shall better understand why it was David compared God to a sun. And—

The sun gives light. Darkness is the time for rest, *for sweet, refreshing* sleep; yet men do not love dark-

ness. Arctic voyagers tell us that when they reach those desolate regions of eternal ice and snow, where the sun disappears for months, the men grow melancholy, and some even die because they cannot see its light. Yes, men do not love darkness; they pine for light as the exile pines for his native country, the prisoner for liberty, the sick man for health, or as the mother pines for a glimpse of the dear little face hidden away under the daisies. Children do not love darkness; they imagine all horrible things concerning it, and people it with invisible but all-powerful and swift-moving forms of dread. But the light of the sun banishes night; its long golden beams, shooting up away there in the east, make the darkness fly as the conquered in battle fly from their pursuers; children awake from their sleep, and are no longer afraid. The wise man said truly, that "light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun."

There is, however, another darkness besides that arising from the absence of the sun—a darkness whose dwelling-place is in the hearts of men and women, boys and girls—a darkness from whence all evil and wicked thoughts come, and where bad and cruel actions first spring into life. With this darkness in the heart, children cannot live a true and noble life, cannot think or do that which is right, cannot *love that which is* pure and beautiful. Now, God is

the sun which will dispel this darkness, and flood the heart with soft, beautiful light. "The entrance of Thy Word giveth light," cried one; "The Lord is my light and salvation," he cried again, and yet once more, "God is the Lord, which hath showed us light."

It would be foolish of any man, any boy or girl, if, having the light, they chose rather to dwell in darkness—it would not only be foolish, but sinful and wrong, and yet there are some who do this, they are those of whom Jesus spoke when He said, "They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil;" of whom Job speaks, "They are those who rebel against the light, they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof;" and again, "They grope in the dark without light, and He maketh them to stagger like a drunken man." Let not this be the case with you, my dear children; do not choose darkness rather than light. Why, even flowers teach you different. Place them near the window, they grow towards the light; hide them away in the dark, and they struggle towards it. Shall they live a truer life than you? No, no; on the contrary, when you hear the great prophet's invitation, "Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord," respond to it by the earnest cry, "Lord, lift up the light of Thy countenance upon me." "Then shall Thy light break forth as the morning."

Astronomers tell us that the light which comes from the sun is pure white light; but when it reaches the atmosphere which surrounds our earth, it becomes discoloured, because the medium through which it passes is impure. This is true also of the light which cometh from God—it is perfectly pure and white; but when it reaches our heart it has to pass through so much that is vitiated and bad, that it becomes tainted with our own imperfections, so that we cannot reflect it back in its original purity. This, however, should make us earnestly crave for more light still, so that by its increase the heart may more fully acknowledge that the "Lord God is a sun." Again:

The sun gives life. If the sun were to disappear, all vegetation would die. Trees would put forth no more green leaves, and there would be no more beautiful spring blossoms. Lovely flowers would vanish from field and hedgerow, and no longer adorn and beautify our gardens, or shed the sweet fragrance of their presence in our household rooms. There would be no fields of sweet-scented clover, or meadows of waving grass, or fields of bowing corn. No longer could it be said of the wind what the poet has sung:

"It said unto the forest, 'Shout!
Hang all your leafy banners out!'
It whispered to the fields of corn,
'*Bow* down, and hail the coming morn!'"

No, there would be no more leafy woods and forests for the winds to sweep through and make pleasant music, and no more fields of brown-eared corn to bend beneath its passing breath. With the absence of the sun, all would be desolation; the dream of another poet would be realised, when he says—

"I dreamed the spring would be no more!"

Yes; desolation and silence would reign, for there would be no sweet-singing birds to ravish the air with their songs; all would be winter and death. The sun giveth life.

And God, the great Eternal Sun, giveth life to the hearts and souls of His creatures—to men and women, to boys and girls. When the earth is dead and buried beneath the cold, and ice, and snow of winter, the returning warmth of the beautiful spring sun touches it with new life, and the snow is melted, the ice bands are loosed, and earth smiles in beauty again. So likewise when the heart is "dead in trespasses and sins," and is hardened with the ice and snow of indifference, God touches it and says, "Awake! Live!" Even as we read that Jesus said unto the dead girl, "Maiden, I say unto thee, Arise!" And to the dead son of the widowed woman at the gate of the city, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!" And at the grave of His friend, "Lazarus, come forth!" And as

in all these instances the dead awoke from their sleep, so shall the heart dead in trespasses and sins awake into new life. Again:

The sun gives strength. Not only life, but strength. A plant may have life, an animal may have life, but at the same time be weak, puny, and frail, with scarce sufficient strength to lift its head above the ground in the one instance, or to crawl over it in the other. But the sun—that wonderful life sustainer—gives them vigour, hardihood, and strength, by flooding them with heat. It is because the sun's genial warmth diffuses itself throughout my body, that I am able to move my finger, lift up my arm, and do my little portion of work. Men immured in dungeons, hid away from the heat of the sun, become weak and nerveless, with no strength in muscle or bone, in body or limb.

It is the same with the Divine Sun—God; not only does He give life to the soul, He also sustains it in strength. If you, children, receive the Divine life from Him, and continue to let mind, heart, and soul be bathed in the sunshine of His loving smile, He will give to them health, tone, and vigour; He will confirm the "weak hands and the feeble knees;" He will give you strength to overcome temptation, to wage successful warfare with the wicked one; to bear trial, pain, and sorrow, with manly courage and for*titude; strength* calmly to endure slight, contumely,

and persecution. It was His loving smile which gave strength and endurance to martyrs of old, and enabled them to bear the anguish of the fiery flames, as they curled round the body, or the agony of the wrench on the dreadful rack; not men and women only, but boys and girls have also endured these things, and endured them bravely. If you ask, God will give you this strength to carry you through all the annoyances, troubles, and trials of your everyday life. "Ask and ye shall receive." Again:

The sun gives beauty. It paints the rainbow in the heavens, touches the clouds with splendour, and giveth to the evening sky its crimson, gold, and amber glories. It maketh the waves to sparkle and break out into myriads of sunny dimples; its smile causeth the snow to glitter like diamond dust, and at times be tinted with a roseate hue; and vast icebergs become like unto fantastic and fairy palaces, built up of precious metals and stones, in lands of enchantments and dreams. It gives the velvety smoothness to the leaves of the flower, the delicate tint to the petal of the rose, the blue to the violet, the crimson to the tips of the little daisy. Beneath its smile the grape becomes purple, the apple has a delicate blush, and the plum a lovely bloom—while the leaves of all trees bud and grow into every variety and shade of green. It also kisses the cheeks of little children,

boys and girls, touching them with freshness and colour. The sun does all this and more wonderful things too.

And God, like the great sun, giveth beauty. Beneath His influence, bathed in His loving smile, the mind becomes peopled with beautiful thoughts and fancies, the heart filled with all sweet human loves, and the soul with all holy affections. The light of purity and innocence flashes from the eye, and the trustful, loving smile trembles on the lip. All these beautiful thoughts, sweet human loves, and holy affections, resolve themselves into the beauty of action; there is the tender word, the winning smile, and the soft pressure of the hand, to bind up the broken in heart, and the sorrowful in spirit; the hand is stretched out to give the cup of cold water where it is needed; sweet sacrifices are made for others' good and for those we love; the sick are visited, and the dying are comforted. Are not all these actions manifestations of beauty, which each boy or girl can exhibit, if they will but turn their faces up to the sunlight of God's presence? But—

Sometimes the sun is hidden behind a cloud. This very frequently happens. The mists and vapours rise up from the earth and float as clouds *in the air; and,* thus floating, and being driven by

the wind, they pass over the face of the sun, obscuring all its brightness for a time. We look up, and the cloud appears black and lowering, sometimes threatening, as if charged with thunders and lightnings. This often happens in the history of a boy or girl; a great cloud of pain, illness, trouble, or affliction, seems to hide away the smiling face of their heavenly Sun; God seems to have hidden Himself, and their days move under a dark shadow, and they cry, "Oh that I might find Him!" Courage! God is there still. We see the dark face of the cloud, but not the silver light within. Every cloud hath its silver lining. So with the cloud over the life; it hath its bright light, its silver lining; and when the cloud passeth away—as pass it will—there will be the same loving face and smile, and all the more sweet because for a time obscured and hid away. Once more, and only once:

Sometimes the sun suffers an eclipse. You all know what a solar eclipse is, do you not? It is the moon passing between the earth and the sun; so making darkness to reign at noonday, the earth to remain overshadowed, the brightness of the sun to vanish, its long golden beams all absorbed.

Sometimes in the history of a boy or girl, the Divine Sun, the great Sun of Righteousness, suffers an eclipse. Anger passeth between, and God is not

seen; enmity passeth between, and God is not seen; indulgence in some secret sin passeth between, and God is not seen; some bad thought, some wicked desire, some evil thing, enters your heart and shuts out all God's sunshine; God suffers an eclipse. Let this never be the case with you, my dear children; it must not, if you wish to grow up into beautiful, true, and noble men and women, and at last to reach that home where "the sun shall no more be your light by day, but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory."

CHAPTER III.

CHILDREN AND FLOWERS.

"As a flower of the field."—Isa. lx. 6.

FLOWERS have been called the "stars of the earth." Just as stars shine up in the heavens, so flowers shine on earth. If all the stars were to be swept out of the sky, how black it would appear at night! and if flowers were to disappear from the earth, what a blank they would leave! Their loss would be as the loss of sweet, familiar faces that always gladden our eyes; one of the purest pleasures that men, women, and children enjoy in this world would vanish with them; one of God's choicest blessings would be seen no more, and we should have one revelation less of God himself. God has breathed His beauty into flowers, and scattered them with a lavish hand in meadow and field, in hedgerow and on river bank; and they nestle at the *feet of* giant old oaks like tender thoughts in

the heart of a strong man. There are many lessons children may learn from flowers, and there are many things in which children resemble them. As:

How fresh they are! When shadows climb up in the sky, and darkness falls over land and sea, and the stars come out, flowers fold themselves up and go to sleep, just as children shut their eyes and go to sleep when it is night. But when the morning breaks, when far away in the east the sun is rising and flooding the sky with glory, and birds are stirring and twittering in their nests, flowers awake and drink in the pure morning air and the refreshing dew, and unfold their leaves to the cool breeze. How fresh they are in the early morning hours, when the passing wind is laden with their perfume, which we inhale with so much delight! Their freshness is one of their great charms. It is only when the sun is high up in the heavens that they grow weary and faint.

Freshness is one of the charms of boyhood and girlhood. In the morning of life all is fresh and buoyant, the eye sparkling, the cheek glowing, and the step bounding, for the heart is light, and free from all care. There is something wrong with a flower when it droops faintly in the early morning, and there is also something wrong with a boy or girl when they are careworn and weary. Day by day *flowers look up to* the skies and receive their fresh-

ness from the hands of their Creator; girls and boys should look up each morning and open their hearts to receive the sweet influences of heaven. Try and retain your freshness. But:

How beautiful they are! What is more lovely than a flower? How delicately their leaves are tinted with beauty; how smooth, like satin and velvet, they are to the touch! How varied are their shades of tint and colour! There is a whole rainbow of colour in flowers: they are like the precious stones in the walls of the New Jerusalem. But colour is only one aspect of their beauty. Look at their wonderful structure, their exquisite and manifold forms and shapes; we never tire of beholding them; bell-shaped, cup-shaped, globe-shaped, they are presented to our sight in every conceivable variety. How rich must be the stores of beauty in the mind that conceived them! Jesus once said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these." Only think, the beauty of a little flower placed before the glory of a great king!

Although God has bestowed such lavish beauty upon flowers, He has not bestowed *all* beauty; He reserved some for children, for boys and girls; He has tinted their cheek with colour, and given beauty

to their light flashing eye; He has endowed them with the beauty of form, in the roundness of the limb and in the shapely structure of the frame; He has imparted to them the beauty of motion, in the trembling of the lip and the graceful movements of the body. And this is not all.

If you carefully examine flowers, you will discover that they have an inward beauty as well as an outward beauty, an internal structure more wonderful than that revealed to the eye, which will survive when the other is faded, and from which the outward beauty is unfolded. God, who has done this for flowers, has also done it for children. He has implanted in them a soul, which is more beautiful than the body, and which will live after the body is dead; indeed, some wise men have believed that true beauty has its home in the soul, and that it flows out from thence into the eye, and lip, and cheek; so that when time and care dims the one, takes away the roundness from the other, and the fulness from the third, a more subtle beauty shines out in their place. And then:

How innocent they are! Great men love flowers, not only because they are beautiful, but because they are so innocent. They grow and bloom, but think of nothing that is evil, say nothing that is bad, do no wrong, commit no sin. They never get angry and *quarrel or fight*, neither do they say anything that is

false one of another; they live in harmony, untouched by envy, pure and free from all guilt. God made them so.

Are children as innocent as flowers? I think they ought to be; perhaps in some measure they are, when they are unconscious of much that is evil, when they are honest, and trustful, and simple. Jesus believed this of them, for we read that once, when talking to His disciples, He "called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." And once again He said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Strive to retain your innocence, that you may always be worthy of this high commendation. Yet again:

How useful they are! Flowers are ministering spirits. They say wonderful things to those who can understand the language of flowers.

"Flowers will not cease to speak,
And tell the praise of God,
Even to the careless man,
Who has upon them trod."

They suggest thousands of beautiful images to the mind. How retiring, modest, and meek they are! What can be more beautiful and sweet than the little violet? and yet it hides itself from sight. Learn of

flowers. Some One has said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." How they brighten a room by their presence! They are like gleams of sunshine on a cloudy day. Many a poor sufferer on a bed of pain, in a hot and stifling room of a narrow court, has been cheered and strengthened by a flower; it was like the presence of God in the room, bringing consolation and hope. Prisoners in their dreary cells have been cheered by flowers; and a prison matron tells of one woman, hard-hearted and bad, who one day found a daisy in her cell that some visitor had dropped there, and over which she cried and wept bitter tears, for it brought back to her memory and heart the days of her innocent childhood, when she gathered them in the fields, and no mother wept because she had broken her heart.

A poor traveller, far, far away from home and friends, deserted by his men, alone in a foreign land, parched with thirst, and nearly starved with hunger, weary and footsore with much travel, surrounded on every hand by fierce enemies, was nigh unto despair; he thought the best thing he could do was to lie down and die; but just as that thought flashed into his mind, he saw at his feet a little flower, a species of daisy, and he thought, "If God cares for this tiny flower so far away from the haunts of men, surely He *cares for me;* am I not of more value than many

flowers?" And this cheered his fainting heart, and he went on his way with renewed hope.

Yes; little flowers are of use in the world. A great poet who loved flowers, and has said more about them than any other poet, writes:

> "The daisy, by the shadow that it casts,
> Protects the lingering dew-drop from the sun."

Cannot children do as much, cannot they be ministering spirits? Cannot they, too, make their presence felt as a blessing? Have they no words they can utter which will bring a pulse of gladness and love to some lonely and saddened heart? Cannot they think of some places where their presence will act as a charm to brighten poverty and the dreariness of old age?

> "The little child, in trustful glee,
> With love and gladness brimming o'er,
> Many a cup of ministry
> May for the weary veteran pour."

Did you ever read the story of "Wee Willie?" It is a little book, which tells how the prattling voice of a child, the caressing arms of a child, carry with them such magic power, that anger is dispelled, hearts are softened, and spirits touched with beautiful life. Learn to be ministering spirits.

But even flowers may be soiled. Yes, flowers become *soiled*. They get dirty and impure; dust

accumulates on their leaves, hiding much of their beauty and loveliness. Sometimes, as you walk through narrow courts, where the sun scarcely ever penetrates, or through crowded and noisy streets, you may see pots of flowers standing on window-sills; smoke has soiled them, mire and dirt from the street have settled on them and destroyed their freshness and purity; they are beautiful still, but their beauty is almost hidden. Children, like flowers, get soiled sometimes. Not only do their bodies get dirty, but that far more beautiful thing, the soul. Children learn to indulge in many little faults, which settle, like so much dust, upon the soul; its freshness gets lost and its purity stained by untruthfulness and sin.

How can soiled flowers become clean? Why, if you take them away from the crowded street out into the open country, and let the soft breezes blow upon them, the sweet rain and gentle dew fall upon and wash them, and let them feel the warmth of the glorious sun, then all will soon be changed; the dirt and impurity will all disappear, and the flowers will regain new freshness and life as they sport in the bright sunbeams. Children, too, must bask in the beams of the great Sun of Righteousness; they must look up to the skies to receive their gentle influences, and like flowers which seem to be asking for rain, they *must ask, they* must cry, "Wash me thoroughly from

'If you examine a rosebush, you may perhaps see one rose with its leaves *all withered.'*—CHILDREN'S HOUR, p. 39.

mine iniquities, and cleanse me from my sin." "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." This will bring back all your lost purity; for is it not said that the "blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin?"

I have known a worm in a flower. Sometimes flowers perish, even in the brightest of spring or summer days. If you examine a rose-bush, you may, perhaps, see one rose with its leaves all withered, its beauty all gone, its life all ended; no rain, or dew, or sun will ever bring it back again. Why is this? Pull the leaves apart and examine the heart of the rose. Why, it has no heart! it is all gone! there is only a hole where the heart ought to be! How is this? Examine it a little closer. What do you see? Why, at the very bottom of the hole a little worm is actively at work, burrowing its way deeper down. This it is that has killed the rose before its time; it has eaten away its heart; it has eaten away its life.

This is sometimes the case in the history of a boy or girl: a little worm sets to work to burrow into their heart; and if it is not speedily dislodged, it will work incalculable mischief. Let me name a few of these little worms which destroy the beauty of children, eat into their heart, take up their abode there, and work such irreparable damage. There is Envy. This is a very subtle worker when it once commences; it taints the blood of the heart, changes

its colour, and instead of a bright crimson, turns it into a yellowish green. It affects the sight, so that every object the eye looks upon loses its old familiar hue. Sometimes Envy is followed by another little worm, called Greed, and they work together, one helping the other. This last infuses a spirit of coveteousness in the heart, so that the boy or girl is discontented with his or her possessions, and craves for those of their companions.

Passion is another little worm. It makes the eyes flame, the face flush, and the hand ready to strike. Pride is a fourth. This makes the back stiff, the face cold, the glance disdainful; the boy or girl thinks no one is to be compared to himself or herself, and walks and acts accordingly. These are only a few of the little worms which try to eat their way into the heart, to destroy its loveliness. My dear boys, my dear girls, you must not harbour them; you must drive them out; do all in your power to destroy them; never, on the contrary, let them destroy you. If you find it hard work to kill them, there is Some One who is willing to help you, if you only call upon Him; cry to Him, "Cleanse Thou me from secret sins, O God!" "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my ways." And lastly:

Even flowers die. All lovely things die, and *flowers among the* number. They bloom and flourish

through the fresh spring and bright summer months; but when chill autumn winds blow, they droop and die. They have charmed eyes and gladdened hearts; they have accomplished their work, and now they perish from the face of the earth. Children must die as well as flowers. However long they may live, there comes a time when the colour will fade from the cheek, the light from the eye, and the strength from the arm.

When a flower dies, where does its beautiful life go to? Why, it sinks down into the root, there to remain all through the cold, dreary winter months, to have a cheerful resurrection when the bright spring-time returns. When a boy or girl dies, the body is placed in the earth, hidden away from sight; but above the place where it lies a voice is heard saying, "Behold, she is not dead, but sleepeth!" Yes, sleeping until the resurrection morn, when the same voice will cry, "I say unto thee, Arise!" And the dead will awake, starting up from their long sleep into new life and beauty.

But the life goes out entirely from some flowers, and the gardener pulls them up, root and all, and throws them on one side ready for the fire. Oh, let not this be the case with you, my dear children; let not the Divine gardener come and say, "I have dug around and watered it; but it is dead; cut it down,

why cumbereth it the ground?" No, no; on the contrary, let Him find you full of life and beauty, that even Death, as his minister, may say, in the words of the poet:

"'My Lord has need of these flowerets gay,'
The Reaper said, and smiled;
'Dear tokens of the earth are they,
Where He was once a child.

"'They shall all bloom in fields of light,
Transplanted by my care,
And saints, upon their garments white,
These sacred blossoms wear.'

"Oh, not in cruelty, not in wrath,
The Reaper came that day;
'Twas an angel visited the green earth,
And took the flowers away."

CHAPTER IV.

LESSONS FROM THE LILY.

"Grow as the lily."—HOSEA xiv. 5.

WHAT time so appropriate as the beautiful summer-time in which to speak of flowers, when the whole earth is strewn with them, in all their wonderful variety of form and tint and colour; when moor and field and garden, as it were, are overrun with them, and even the rough and rugged mountain bears them on its hard bosom?

Come with me, this sunshiny day, and, hand in hand, together let us take a walk, a quiet stroll, into the field and garden, and look at the lovely flowers, and listen to what they say; for each cup, each bell, each vase of beauty has its own wise words, if we will but take heed and hearken. See what numbers there are! Every step we take crushes some to the earth! How full to overflowing must be the riches of that treasury from whence they all came!

"Oh, what forms and tints have ye,
Nature's living jewellery;
And though each of beauty rare,
Yet how plentiful ye are!"

See, here is a moss-rose. Is it not lovely? How fragrant! It has a diamond, in the shape of a dew-drop, on its leaves; beauty added to beauty! But let us pass on. We will not stay now to speak of the rose, or listen to what it has to say; neither will we listen to the climbing honeysuckle, the beautiful pansy, or the tiny forget-me-not, though each would well repay us. But here is a flower I love very much, and which I wish you to love too; it is a lily—

"Lilies have their lovely birth
In the balmy summer air;
Lilies spring from the black earth,
Yet they grow so sweet and fair."

We will sit here on this soft plot of grass, and hear what the lily has to say, what it can preach to us. Would it not be delightful to grow as the lily?

How does a lily grow? "I grow in silence," says the lily. Silence is not the attribute of a boy or girl, they love to make a noise, the more noise the more pleasure with many; but the lily grows in silence. Silence is very wonderful. It is easy to make a noise, but hard to be silent; and yet in silence, and from silence, what lovely things grow! The stars do not *come out with a* great noise, they come out in silence.

What a world of wonder there must be in the silent ground, when it is the birthplace of all the flowers, the gold, the diamonds, and of all precious stones! You do not hear the lily cry out and complain if the wind blows it too roughly, or the rain and hail beat too heavily upon it; it does not cry or whine when the chill nips it; no, it bears it all in silence.

Learn, like the lily, to grow in silence. When disappointment comes, when pain of body comes, and when sorrow—the pain of heart—comes, as each and all will to every one, bear them quietly. You would not think very highly of a boy or girl who ran about saying, "See how miserable I am! See how wretched I am! See what pain, what grief I have to endure!" No, such a character would rather excite your contempt; its weakness would make you smile. It is far nobler to bear all these things in silence; and, if borne in silence, they aid in the growth of a grand and beautiful character. Grow in silence.

> "Silent spirit, dwell with me;
> I myself would quiet be;
> Quiet as the growing blade,
> Which through earth its way has made;
> Silently, like morning light,
> Putting mists and chills to flight."

How does the lily grow? "I grow in beauty," says the lily. Grace is beauty, and "graceful as a lily" has become quite a proverb. Look at its slender green

stem, and its flag-like leaf, surmounted by the lovely vase-like flower with its delicately cut edges. Is it not beautiful? And is it not marvellous that it is so beautiful? How does it grow so lovely? Listen. "I drink in," says the lily, "all the warm sunshine, the gentle breeze, the refreshing rain, and the cool dew; and it is these that make me so beautiful, and enable me to bend so gracefully. To be beautiful, I have to drink in what is beautiful; were I to reject the sunshine, the rain, and the dew, I should soon become shrivelled and ugly." Then, to grow beautiful, you also must drink in what is beautiful. Beauty is a great gift; and all girls, at least when they come to know the charm of beauty—the magic power it exercises over others, how all, both young and old, yield obedience to its spell—desire to be beautiful, and a most natural desire too.

But there are several kinds of beauty not at all like the lily's. There is a hard kind of beauty, like that of the diamond. It is clear, calm, cold; no impression can be made upon it, because it is so very hard. And there is another kind of beauty, easy and graceful enough, but oh! so cruel, like that of the panther and tiger, and, like them, quite merciless. Now, it is possible for both a boy and girl to grow up into such beauty as that of the hard diamond or the cruel tiger; but is it *possible for a boy* or girl to grow up into such loveli-

ness as that of the lily? Yes, I think, nay, I am sure it is, and more too; they can become even more beautiful. A very thoughtful writer, once looking at flowers, which he loved very dearly, said:

> "True it is, I gaze and sigh,
> So uncouth and darksome I;
> But I should not love you so,
> Could I not more lovely grow."

Then strive to grow beautiful as the lily; drink from all the springs of beauty, they are many and open to all; fill your heart with all tender emotions, all sweet affections, all endearing loves; let it pant with noble desires, with high hopes, with lofty aspirations; make your mind a storehouse for great thoughts, for grand ideas, and for lovely fancies; these will make you beautiful, more beautiful even than the lily. Do this now, while you are young; while you are growing, grow in loveliness.

How does the lily grow? "I grow in purity," says the lily. All beautiful things are not pure; but the lily is beautiful, and yet it is always taken as an emblem of purity and innocence. It has its root in the black earth, but the black earth does not defile it; it bends to and fro in the soft breeze, free from all stain, untouched by the dark mould. There are many things which surround it, which hem it in, which float about on the air, which lurk in the darkness, that would

make it impure, did the lily but draw them in and make them part of itself. But no, the lovely flower rejects them all; it will not be tempted to violate its own purity, to deface its own innocence. The wind may blow dust upon its leaves, but it drinks in the rain and dew that washes it away, as it lifts up its head to the passing shower and to the blue sky. Sweet flower, what a beautiful teacher you are! Will you not receive its lessons?

Grow pure as the lily. Reject all that is evil, all that will stain your soul with impurity. Let no bad, wicked, unholy thoughts or desires, any unlawful longings enter your heart, to defile it and make it unclean; put away all uncleanliness. In a world like this in which you live, you will be tempted every day to do that which is wrong, to commit evil in the sight of God, to think a bad thought, say a bad word, or do a bad action. But try to resist the temptation; say, "How can I do this thing and sin against God?" pray for strength to overcome the temptation; cry:

> "Shut my heart up like a flower,
> At temptation's darksome hour."

Do not read that bad book, put it away from you; do not walk with that bad companion; give up that bad habit you are always indulging in; do not talk evil of your schoolfellow, your playmate; keep a guard over *your tongue;* watch that you sin not. Every sin is a

dark spot upon the soul, is a shutting out of God's sweet sunshine from the heart. Grow as the lily, pure. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," is the sweet promise. A pure heart is a happy heart, and a happy heart, out of the abundance of its happiness, will cherish kindly thoughts, which in time will lead to kindly actions.

> "Happy are the pure whose heart
> Freely blooms in every part;
> Godly acts are living gems,
> Fit for crowns and diadems."

Grow in silence, and you will get strength; grow in beauty, and you will have a magic charm; grow in purity, and you will have God's sweet smile, and one day be transplanted to His own lovely garden.

CHAPTER V.

CHILDREN AND SHIPS.

"The way of a ship in the sea."—PROV. xxx. 19.

YOU all know what a ship is. Many of you have seen one, and those who have not have either heard or read of such a thing. What sight is so beautiful as one in full sail, cutting its way through the blue waters, bound to some distant land, the wind puffing out its white sails, and the bright sunbeams making the waves sparkle, and gilding all —sails, deck, and sea—with a glow of glory? But, as you have seen or read of ships, did you ever think that each one of you, each boy and each girl, is like a ship, is in fact a little ship in himself and herself, sailing over the sometime bright and sometime stormy sea of time? Listen, while I try to show in what way you resemble ships.

Think of the ship's crew. A ship without a crew *would make a very* poor voyage indeed, or rather no

voyage at all; it would be tossed hither and thither at the mercy of every wind and wave, run ashore, or perhaps founder. Each ship, therefore, has its proper number of men when it sails from harbour. First, there is the captain; he has supreme command over everything and everybody, all have to obey him, his word is law, all look to him for guidance, he must be equal to every demand. But as he cannot be in every part of the ship at one and the same time, he has officers beneath him, called mates—these are second in authority to himself; when he is absent or asleep they command, but when present they convey his orders to different parts of the vessel, they see the work properly done. Then come the steersmen, the sail-trimmers, the look-out men, and others whom it is needless to mention; but each and all have to obey the captain, or there would be an end of all discipline, and disorder would reign supreme.

As it is with the ship, so it is with each boy and girl—each is manned by a proper crew. There is Will, that is captain, that governs, or should govern, every part and portion of the body. Everything comes beneath the rule and sway of the Will; all the other members have to bow in obedience, have to run and execute whatever order is given by the Will. Then comes Thought and Imagination; these are like the mates of the vessel, and next in command

to the Will, beneath whom they labour or should labour, to whose authority they bow or should bow. Then follow the crew, Hope, Memory, Vigilance, Appetite, and Desire; these all look up to Will as commander, they obey his rule, they respect his authority; and according to whether they are amenable to his rule or inclined to be unruly, so is his rule gentle or stern. But:

After the vessel is manned, the compass is required, or the ship would make but little speed in the right course, be the captain never so clever and the crew never so praiseworthy and active. A ship without a compass is an unheard-of event. That little, delicate, sensitive needle is of vast importance! Always pointing in one direction, always to the north, never east, west, or south. With no compass on board there would be very little chance of the vessel reaching the right port; but with that little finger mysteriously pointing in one direction, wind and weather favourable, the vessel's head can be kept right.

Now a ship is not the only thing that has a compass on board, every little boy and girl has one by which to steer and shape his or her course: it is called Conscience; like the magnetic needle, it always indicates the right course, never points wrong. Of course you have the power of going wrong by not *attending to what* it says, just as the captain of a

vessel has; but then you must remember it will be at your own peril, you will not be able to lay the blame on the compass, and say, "That led me wrong." Guard well your compass, examine it narrowly and constantly, do not be so vain as to suppose you can steer without its aid. But the compass, useful and indispensable as it is, is not alone sufficient for the vessel to steer right. Therefore:

Every ship must have a chart on board. A chart is as necessary as a compass. The one points out the course and the other shows you what objects in the way you have to avoid. A captain will trust a great deal to his compass, but much more to his chart. In making a voyage there are little islands, sandbanks, sunken rocks, and whirlpools to avoid; if the vessel ran on or into any of these, there would be danger of shipwreck; the cruel rocks would pierce the frail timbers, the water would rush in, and soon all would be over. Here and there would rise

> "the bubbling cry
> Of some strong swimmer in his agony,"

which the sea would choke ere it was half uttered; and ship, cargo, and men would find an ocean grave, with the wild wave and the wild wind their only mourners. Now the chart shows where all the dangers lie; so that the captain has but to examine

it, and then, according to the danger, steer east, west, north, or south, to avoid it. A captain places great faith in his chart.

As with the ship, so with each boy and girl, they not only have their compass, but they also have a true chart—a chart that never errs, a chart that faithfully marks where this half-sunken rock lies, or that dreary sandbank; or points out what little coral island has to be avoided; it tells how to vary your course so as to escape the danger of shipwreck. The chart of which I speak is the Bible; it has proved a true chart to thousands and thousands who have sailed over the sea of time, and it will prove a true chart to thousands yet to sail; and if you, my dear boys and girls, trust to it, consult it, and avoid the dangers it points out, it will be equally faithful to you. It would be foolish if a captain steered his vessel regardless of what his chart told him; and it will be equally foolish in you, if, having a chart, you never consult it to know what dangers to avoid, but go heedlessly on, as if neither chart nor danger were in existence. Consult your chart. Again:

Sometimes there is danger of mutiny on board; there are foes in the ship. However well a captain may have his crew in hand, however active the crew themselves, there is sometimes one among the number *who is disloyal,* disaffected, does not submit will

ingly to the captain's rule, will not obey freely his commands, murmurs at his orders, let them be never so necessary or so easy of execution; in short, he is in a chronic state of rebellion. But the mischief does not end here. The man seeks to make others as bad as himself. He is like a firebrand, going here and there, seeking to kindle a flame. He whispers first to one and then to another, "Why should the captain rule us? Are we not as good as the captain, and as well able to command the ship? Well, then, let us be masters. We shall have a jolly time, then; little work and plenty of pleasure!" And so the whisper goes the whole round of the crew. Sometimes the crew are not to be moved from their firm allegiance to their captain, be the whispers never so persuasive; and one will even inform his commander what a firebrand he has on board; and the man is arrested, and put in irons. But it has frequently happened that the crew have greedily drunk in the rebellious murmurs of their wicked shipmate, and in the silence of the night have arisen and murdered their captain, or sent him adrift in an open boat, to be engulfed in the sea, or to reach land how he can —such was the case in the memorable mutiny of the "Bounty"—while they themselves have broken out into wild uproar and riot.

Well, it is very often the case in the history of a

boy or girl, when making their life's voyage, that their crew rise up in rebellion, and they have a mutiny on board. Some bad passion, some wicked desire, creeps in with the rest, and influences first one and then another, sometimes going so far as even to influence the very mates, Thought and Imagination; so that all are up in arms to shake off the authority of Captain Will. Oh, then is a serious time! The safety of the voyage depends upon the issue of the struggle. Occasionally, in the case of the ship, the captain is able to quell the mutiny with a strong hand, and compel the crew to return to their obedience, by slaying the ringleaders. And this is what you must try to do. This is what you must do. You must slay the bad passion, the wicked desire. Give it, or them, no quarter. Do not shrink back from the threatened danger; face it, and, with God's help, quell it. Again:

Sometimes there is danger from without; pirates attack the ship. Even in these days pirates exist. They are not so completely swept from the seas as highway robbers appear to be from our roads. They still infest certain waters. The fierce Malay, in his sharp-pointed and swift-sailing proa, and the cruel Chinaman, in his clumsy-looking junk, are ever ready to pounce upon the unwary ship. Lying concealed in *small harbours* and creeks, they keep a sharp look-

out for the outward or homeward bound merchantman; and then, either in the disguise of a friend, they make their approach, or when the shadows of night are falling thick over the ocean, they steal from their hiding-places, and silently and stealthily draw near to their intended victim; and should the unfortunate vessel be becalmed, and no watch kept on board, or the watch sleeping at his post, and only aroused as he hears the pirates climbing up the vessel's side, there is very little hope of escape; but, instead, death or captivity for both captain and crew, and plunder and destruction, by scuttling or fire, for the ship. But if the captain knows what waters he is in, and has a sharp look-out kept, and arms his men for the worst, so that when the cruel foe draws near, everything is prepared to repel the attack, then he may come off victorious. Yet the struggle will be fierce and deadly. The pirates will not readily relinquish their intended prey, but strive their utmost to gain possession of the vessel. It will be hand to hand, foot to foot, face to face, the encounter will have to be met; no flinching, no yielding an inch, no quarter given or taken—a death-struggle for mastery. Thus the foe will have to be beaten, and driven away discomfited.

Just as it is with a ship, so it is with each boy and girl. They have not only frequently to contend with foes from within, but also with foes from without.

Pirates will attack you as fierce and cruel as any Malay or Chinese. There are temptations that will assail you, will assault you fiercely, determined to gain the victory over you. In a friendly disguise, or in an unguarded moment, they will steal near and attempt to take you by storm. If you do not wish to lose your crew—your hopes, your good desires, your aspirations, your sweet and pure affections—you must not be found sleeping; but, instead, ever on the alert, active, and watchful. Never allow yourselves to be taken unawares; keep a bright look-out; be ever prepared to repel the foe; and if he attempts to board you, as he assuredly will, keep a bold front, ply your weapons swiftly; slash, and cut, and thrust, and fire incessantly. Give no time for parley. He who parleys is lost. Give no quarter; strike and slay, for he with whom you fight is indeed a fierce and ruthless pirate, who, if he once gains possession, will be your destroyer. But again:

Ships encounter storms. I should imagine there never has been a ship that sailed across seas but what has encountered lesser or greater storms. "They that go down to the sea in ships," says the Psalmist, "that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. For He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, *which lifteth up* the waves thereof. They mount up

to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end." And in such storms the captain has to exercise all his skill in seamanship; no sail, or but very little, can be carried; the huge waves curl high above the vessel and seem as though they would overwhelm it quite. The fierce winds blow upon it until it has to scud under what sailors call "bare poles." And sometimes, when all expedients of seamanship have been tried, and tried in vain, they can do nothing but cling to the ship and wait, or "cry unto the Lord, and He bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet." No ship goes to sea without being prepared for stormy weather.

And you, my dear children, like the ship, must anticipate and be prepared for storms; it is not all pleasant sailing; your sky will be overcast and the bright sunshine clouded; fierce winds will blow upon you and rock you to and fro, threatening to shatter your frail bark; the angry sea will arise and threaten to engulf you. Oh, you will tremble, you will be sore dismayed, you will drift helplessly along, chart and compass forgotten in your sharp distress; then *you will sing:*

"My bark is on a stormy sea,
The waters rage around;
The fierce winds rend the sails apart,
And tear the tall mast down.

"The wild waves sweep clean o'er the deck
And carry all away;
And hope sinks screaming in the deep,
No more to see the day!"

Then, like the poor sailor in his extremity, you will have to cry unto the Lord in your distress; and if your cry is earnest, heartfelt, and not a lip cry merely, He will bring you out of your trouble. Again:

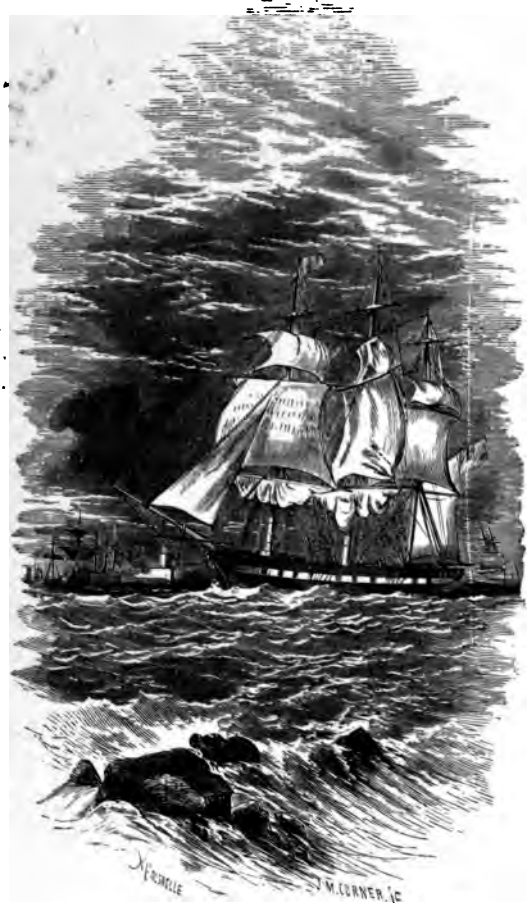
Some ships suffer shipwreck. A great number are wrecked, but few in comparison to the many thousands that sweep across all seas; and yet each one that is lost darkens some home, some hearts mourn for those who have found a grave beneath the wild wave, for no ship leaves port without some prayers ascending for the safety of those on board. And how are ships wrecked? Sometimes it is through carelessness; the chart has not been sufficiently studied, or it may have been lost overboard during a storm. The compass may have got out of order, no sharp look-out has been kept; and so, sailing heedlessly along, the vessel has struck upon a rock! Or fierce winds and terrible storms have driven it helplessly upon shore: then ensues a fearful scene, hope seems *to desert the hardy* mariners; no boat will live in the

raging, boiling sea, and despairingly they cling to whatever keeps them from being washed overboard. That is an awful time! they in despair, and the sea ready to swallow them up. Is there any hope? Yes, see! What is that buoyant thing mounting the crest of each wave like a creature of life? It is—yes, it is the lifeboat! They have seen the wreck from the shore, and the gallant men have manned the boat and put off into the storm to save the crew! Will they reach the doomed vessel? How bravely the men toil at the oar. How intently the poor shipwrecked crew watch the approach of the boat; now it is seen on the foamy crest of a wave, and then again it sinks from sight into the hollow. Oh, how they pray that it may reach them; it is their only hope! And reach them it does, and the poor half-dead men are rescued from a watery grave.

You, boys and girls, may one day be in just such a plight; you may suffer shipwreck from carelessness and neglect; you may lose your chart, the Bible. Your compass, the conscience, may get out of working order; storms may drive you on shore, seas may threaten to swallow you up, you may be in despair, and out of the depths you may cry for help. Will there come an answering cry? Yes, see! You have your lifeboat!—Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! He will come across stormy waters to your rescue, and if you trust

yourself to Him, as the sailors to their lifeboat, all will be well, you will reach shore in safety. Once more, and only once:

Many ships reach port at last. There are some wrecked, but there are more reach port; some sail in with colours flying and sails set, not much the worse for the voyage. Others again but barely reach port, with torn sails and shattered deck, the voyage has been so disastrous, so long, and so stormy. It sometimes happens that in a fierce storm the ship springs a leak, and there is danger of sinking. The men fly to the pumps, their only hope. How hard they work at them! The captain paces the deck, encouraging them by word and gesture; he has sent a man to the mast-head to look out for land. "Courage, my men, courage; we can't be far from land!" And then he hails the look-out, "Mast-head, there!" "Ay, ay!" comes the faint answering cry. "Do you see land?" Then you can fancy the look-out scanning the horizon once more before he answers, "No, no land in sight!" "Courage, my men; work away!" and two or three more turns are taken ere he again hails. "Mast-head there!" "Ay, ay, sir!" "Do you see land?" "I see a cloud about the size of a man's hand!" "Courage, my men, courage; land must be near." Presently it is the mast-head that hails, "On *deck there!*" "Ay, ay!" goes up the answering cry.



CHILDREN AND SHIPS.—CHILDREN'S HOUR, p. 62.

"Land! land! land!" comes the joyous shout. The men work with renewed strength, hope has infused them with fresh courage. And so, working and hoping, they reach port, although in a sinking condition.

And this may be your experience, my dear children. In some storm, some hurricane, you may spring a leak. Others may reach port with flying colours, but you are beset with fears and doubts; the heavenly port is not in sight, you are fearful of sinking ere you can gain it. How intently you look out ahead, while hope tries to infuse you with courage! Then how glad, how joyously you shout when the harbour-bar is safely crossed, and you are snugly moored in the heavenly port, free from all storms, no more danger from shipwreck! What matters if your sails are torn and your deck shattered? You are safe in port, and can sing:

"Safe home! safe home in port!
Rent cordage, shattered deck!
Torn sails, provisions short,
And only not a wreck!
But oh, the joy upon the shore,
To tell our voyage perils o'er!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE HEART ROOM.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God!"—PSALM li. 10.

THIS is the cry of a great king, and expresses so general a want that it should be the cry of every man and woman, every boy and girl. I have before said that the body of a boy or girl is a little house divided into several separate rooms—the soul room, the mind room, and the heart room; and it is of the heart room King David speaks when he utters this impassioned prayer, "Create in me a clean heart."

Then it is true that the heart can become unclean! I suppose you have all seen a dirty room, and know what an eyesore it is, and how it offends the sense of sight, the sense of smell, and the perception of what is becoming and lovely. If you boys, or you girls, had a house of your own and a dirty room in it, you *would be ashamed* to ask a visitor in, and, indeed, a

visitor would hesitate to enter, knowing well that the dirt and dust would soil them.

It is just so with the heart room; if it becomes dirty it is offensive; purity, truth, and love shrink back, recoil from it; and what visitor in the shape of a good thought, or holy desire, would we dare to invite into it? and even if we mustered sufficient courage to do so, they would merely glance in and hurry away. And He, the pure God, who "turns away His eyes from beholding evil," how think you He regards the unclean heart? Not with pleasure, certainly!

What makes the heart room unclean? You all know what makes a room dirty. It is those atoms, those particles of dust which the wind blows hither and thither, and which find an entrance through every little joint and crevice; it is the dirt which the inmates bring in from the street on the soles of their shoes; it is the stains, the litter made when the room is occupied. How soon a room is made dirty by all these things finding a way into it! And there are just as many things defile and make unclean the heart room. There is pride, envy, covetousness, passion, wicked thoughts, and sinful affections. All these are like so much dust and dirt, so many stains, making the heart room untidy, impure.

If the heart room is unclean, it must not be left

to remain so; it must be made clean. It has no power of itself to become clean, and if left in its state of dirt grows worse and worse; and nothing that is beautiful will ever live in it, for that which is pure cannot bear that which is impure. Then it naturally follows that it must be made clean. But how? If a room in a house is dirty, and the owner dislikes seeing it in that condition, he or she instantly sets to work to make it clean. There are grand sweepings and scrubbings, carpet beating and laying, picture dusting and hanging, window cleaning and fire lighting, and all to make the room present a clean and tidy appearance. Something similar to this must be done to the heart room; we must feel and see it is impure, and then set bravely and earnestly to work to make it clean. But how is this to be done?

Let in plenty of light. Some people put up the shutters at a room window, and draw the curtains close, so as to shut out all the sweet light and sunshine —which the wise man said is pleasant to behold—and then, because they can see no dirt, fancy the room is clean. But let only one solitary ray penetrate through some chink, and wherever it falls there will they discover dirt and impurity. This I very much fear is the way with a great many men and women, *boys and girls*, in their treatment of the heart room:

they bar up every avenue through which the light of God's truth can enter, and then fancy it is perfectly clean and pure. Yet, let but one single ray find its way in—such a ray as "Thou God seest me!" or "He knoweth the secrets of the heart;" such a ray as "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts!"—and they instantly discover how full of dust and dirt it is. If a room is to be cleaned, it must be filled with the light of the sun; and if the heart room is to be cleaned, it must be flooded with the light of God's Word—"The entrance of Thy Word giveth light." Unbar the shutters, draw back the curtains, and let the sweet light in.

But the light, glorious as it is, will not clean the room; it reveals what dirt and dust have accumulated on tables, chairs, and pictures, on carpet and floor; but it does not sweep it away; the owner must do that with broom and duster, with water and brush. You, doubtless, have all seen this done many times. So, when the light of God's truth enters the heart room it points out where the dust and dirt lies, where all the impurity is; and each boy and girl has to set resolutely to work to clear it away. Sometimes this proves a hard task; but, however hard, you must not be discouraged. It takes more than one sweeping and dusting to make a room clean, and just the same

it takes more than one effort to clean the heart room. Room cleaning does not come naturally; you girls have to be taught how to do it. Heart cleaning is not a natural gift; but God, through His dear Son, will teach you how it can be done if you only ask and are willing to learn.

When the heart room is once clean, it should always be kept so. When a room is clean, it is a far wiser plan to touch it up every day, than to allow it to grow dirty again, and have what is called a "grand cleaning day," when everything is in confusion and uproar, and the room, as it were, turned out of the windows, and there is no dry spot left on which one can comfortably rest. This also should be your plan with regard to the heart room; when once clean, strive to keep it so; free from dirt, from all impurity; and to do this thoroughly you must enter and examine it every day, and if a speck of dust has crept in and settled anywhere, instantly whisk it away. This you will find a far easier and wiser plan than examining it once a month, or once a quarter.

What follows if the heart room is kept clean? Guests, friends, like to enter a clean room; it is pleasant to sit in one, and the owner can invite them in with confidence; there they can hold pleasant talk *together, and* rejoice in the mutual interchanges of

friendship and affection. So in like manner, if the heart room is kept clean, is always in beautiful order, you will be able to invite and welcome in some very lovely guests, some very valuable friends. Good thoughts will come and pay it a visit; lovely fancies will delight to look in and make the room brighter by their presence; beautiful hope will become an inmate, and holy affections will abide there; but above and beyond all these you will be able to welcome in a right royal Guest, one who has said, "I will enter and take up my abode with him, and will sup with him." Yes, the good God will enter into the heart room if it is kept clean and pure, and bless and hallow it with His Fatherly love.

What each boy and each girl must do is to cry, like the great King David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God!" and if the cry is earnest, sincere, God will flood it with the light of His truth, and then give you the wisdom and the power to make it and keep it clean.

"Take, Lord, my heart and sweep it well
From dust and stain,
This inner room, where I may dwell
And peace retain.

"Let pictures fair, both new and old,
Hang on the wall;
And thoughts, like curtains rich with gold,
There softly fall.

"Rich fancy, like a carpet, spread
Upon the floor;
Let hope's sweet flowers there perfume shed
And fade no more.

"The windows I will open fling,
That Thy sweet dove
May enter with her folded wing,
And coo her love.

"The door shall always ready be
To open wide,
That when Thou knock'st, I may not Thee
Detain outside.

"This room will be a dwelling fit
For Thy sweet grace,
Where I may ever silent sit
And see Thy face."

CHAPTER VII.

THE KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock"—REV. iii. 20.

IN a green and fruitful valley, formed by two high hills, stood a cottage, covered with ivy and honeysuckle, and with the monthly rose growing near the door. Its roof was a thatch of yellow straw; its walls were brick and cement, white-washed over, and the door of good stout oak. The front windows of the cottage looked into a small flower garden, and from thence down the village street; the door and windows at the back opened into an orchard of fruit-trees, and beyond them into green meadows.

When the morning sun peeped over one of the two hills, it flooded the cottage and all round it with bright light; and when it sank to rest behind the other, the evening sky was flushed with rosy splendour. its last beams lingering on some of its windows.

In the quiet hush of evening, or the still deeper solemn hush of night, could be faintly heard the everlasting moan of the restless sea as its waters beat upon the shore miles and miles away.

The rooms of this cottage were plainly but tastefully furnished; carpets were spread upon the floor, curtains arranged at the windows, books scattered over the tables, and a few choice paintings and water-coloured drawings hung on the walls, representing incidents of heroic adventure and achievement. On a table in the best room stood a curiously-made lamp, but not burning; either there was no oil or some one had neglected to trim and light it.

In this cottage dwelt a handsome youth, with blue eyes, golden hair, and delicate skin; he had attained to that age when the boy was merging, or rather growing, into the young man, and began to feel all the restless impulses and ambitions which mark that period of life. He had lived all his life in the cottage, but until very recently had never thoroughly realised that the cottage and all it contained was his own. Now, however, he was very proud to be able to call it his, and took great pleasure in adorning and making it beautiful; since the fact of ownership had dawned clearly upon his mind, he it was who had hung the pictures on the wall and scattered the books *upon the tables*. He was never weary of walking from

room to room, saying to himself, "This is all mine!" He would gaze upon the pictures and long to do deeds as brave as were there depicted, deeds that should live in song and story; and he would dream and dream of what *he* would achieve when he went out into the world to do his life's work, until the walls of the cottage seemed to fall away, and the whole world was spread out before him, and he saw himself doing some heroic action amid the tumultuous shouts of throngs of innumerable people.

But always, in the interval between each dream, he heard a knocking at the front door of the cottage, and always, as he inclined his ear and listened, he would think of his untrimmed lamp, and perhaps take it from the table, while he murmured, "I ought to open the door." But straightway he would push the lamp on one side, saying, "Time enough yet! I will dream one more dream!" Then the knocking would cease.

One day, when he had grown tired and dissatisfied with his dreaming—for, however pleasant, there is little satisfaction to be derived from merely dreaming—the knocking sounded louder than ever at the door, so loud, indeed, that it quite disturbed him, so much so that he determined to open it and let the applicant in, but before doing so thought it would be as well to trim his lamp. Now when he took the lamp into

his hand, and began to examine it, he found it had grown quite dim, and in one or two places even a speck of rust appeared; not liking his visitor to see it in that condition, he took a piece of leather and set to work to clean it.

While rubbing away at this self-imposed task, the youth fancied he saw a group of gaily-dressed young men pass the window, while their shouts of merry laughter seemed to float musically to his ear; discarding his lamp, he rushed to the window, to make sure his eyes and ears had not played him false; but by the time he reached it the group had vanished, and all he saw was a travel-stained man, standing patiently knocking at the door. Immediately after, a great noise was heard at the back of the cottage, and loud voices demanded admittance; neglecting the weary traveller at the front, he hurried from the room, and throwing wide open the back door, bade whoever were there to enter, and they should receive a most hearty welcome. In answer to this invitation a troup of gaily-dressed, bright-eyed, frolicsome youths stepped in, bearing in their hands, and on their heads, flagons of wine and baskets of grapes; these were followed by young damsels, playing tambourines and rattling castanets, laughing and dancing as they came.

Soon the whole cottage resounded with boisterous

mirth. The first thing the merry youths did on entering was to seize upon the half-cleaned lamp, and throwing it from one to another, ridicule its shape, its make, and its colour, the purpose for which it was made, and the folly of retaining so useless an article, until its owner grew quite red with shame, and snatching it from one of the group, threw it into a disused cupboard, whereat the laugh grew louder, the jest broader, and the merriment more uproarious. Wine was drunk, songs were sung, and dances were danced.

The owner of the cottage tripped it gaily with the rest, drank as deeply, and laughed as loudly, while in his heart he said, "This is just what I wanted; I got tired of dreaming; I wanted excitement; I wanted merriment; I wanted to enjoy life: this is life!"

And the drinking, and the song, and the dance went on; they became intoxicated, they grew mad with merriment. The knocking at the front door was unheeded, indeed, never heard; or perhaps the weary applicant had gone away. The hours sped swiftly on, and it was far into the night ere the merry group took their departure, leaving their host fast asleep in bed.

At midnight, when the young man had slept off some of the fumes of the wine which had mounted to

his brain, he suddenly awoke. The room was in total darkness, and all seemed as silent as the grave; indeed, he could only hear the roaring of the distant sea, but that served only to make the silence seem deeper, while it sent a thrill of fear through his heart, for there was a rumour which had floated to his ears, to the effect that one day that sea would burst upon the village, and wash it away. Suddenly he was startled by hearing a knock at the door! He sat up in bed to listen. Yes, his ears had not deceived him; there it was again! clear and distinct it fell upon his ear, one long continuous knocking! Surely it must be the traveller he saw there in the morning. Should he get up to let him in? No, he was ashamed; he knew he had been unkind and neglectful in not opening the door before. So he buried his face in the pillow, and threw the bed-clothes over his head, that he might not hear.

Morning light usually brings reflection, and as the light of the sun poured into his room, the young man thought how foolish he had been to waste a whole day in boisterous mirth, when the time might have been turned to a far better purpose. And as he thought thus, there came the traveller's knock at the front door; but ere he could move to open it, he *heard the merry* shouts and the loud summon of his

yesterday's companions. For a moment he hesitated which of the applicants he should let in; he felt that both could not, or would not, enter at the same time; if the traveller entered, his merry friends would depart; and if they entered, the traveller would cease his knocking. Meanwhile both were growing importunate.

"I think," murmured the young man, slowly pacing backward and forward, now to one door and now to another; "I think I will just speak to my merry friends, and tell them I can no more entertain them; yes, that will be best. Afterwards I can let in the traveller."

He opened the back door; but before he could utter a word, in trooped the gay throng with laughter, and song, and dance; and yesterday's scenes were enacted over again. Day after day, day after day, the same gay troup paid their visit to the young man, who never hesitated now to open the door to them, and bid them welcome; he ceased to pay any attention to the other knock, and, indeed, he but seldom heard it. Sometimes at night, when he awoke from a fevered sleep, it would fall upon his ear, but at those times he would bury himself in bed, that he might not hear.

At last he grew weary of his gay friends, he

became sad in the midst of all their fun and jollity; their wine, and song, and dance lost their charm and freshness, they grew stale and unexciting, so much so that one morning when the troup paid their accustomed visit, he disregarded their knocking, and, instead, said to himself, "I said of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What doeth it?" And as the words fell from his lips, he heard a knock at the front door.

"Is it the traveller again?" he exclaimed, starting up. "No, no, I cannot let him in, I have other things to do; I must live down this folly and realise some of my early dreams."

Now as he looked up at the pictures on the wall, to recall those youthful dreams to his mind, he found them half defaced by wine stains, and some even torn. "See what my folly has done!" he exclaimed; "my pictures are spoiled, their freshness is gone, I can scarcely make out their subjects. Fool, fool, that I am!"

The knock at the front door sounded louder and louder.

"I will put an end to all this folly, I will win me a name;" and so saying, the young man rushed from the room, and opening the back door, darted right through his gay friends, unheeding their cries, and *sped like the* wind down the valley.

The cottage remained empty for years. The traveller still occasionally returned to the door and knocked, but only the hollow echo of his own knocking replied to him. Every now and again news of the young man found its way to the village. He had become a soldier, and was winning renown on the distant battle-field, his deeds of prowess and valour were recited at many a fireside, his bravery became the theme of story and song, and the Queen conferred high honours upon him; and people looked upon him with admiration, and sometimes even with envy, because of his fame.

One evening, in the still twilight, he returned to his cottage. "How many years have passed since I last entered here!" he said to himself, as he paused upon the threshold, and peered into the rooms. "How narrow and contracted the rooms appear, how dull and uninteresting! I declare," he continued, entering, "all the pictures are faded, and the furniture faded and covered with mildew. I have had no time to see to things, they have all gone to rack and ruin. And what have I gained since I was last in this room? I have done great deeds, men have bestowed fame and honour upon my name. I have become a power in the land. Yet I am not satisfied, I want something else."

And as he thus communed with himself, he was

startled by a low, but clear and distinct, knock at the door!

"Ah!" he exclaimed, starting and looking round, "it must be that traveller come again—I know his knock."

The knock was followed by a sweet voice of entreaty, requesting admittance and rest for the night, promising to repay a hundredfold all labour and expense.

"I wonder," said the inmate, "where my lamp is! I feel half inclined to open the door!"

While he stood hesitating, with one hand half extended towards the door, a stranger entered the room from the back of the cottage, the door having been left unlatched. This stranger wore robes of embroidered gold, with buttons of gold, and with diamond studs in his shirt front, and diamond rings on his fingers; and as he walked, he rustled crisp bank-notes in his pocket, and jingled his gold and silver coins. The face of this stranger was the worst feature about him, it was hard and seamed with wrinkles, and yellowish in hue, while his eyes had a cold metallic glitter in them.

He touched the owner of the cottage upon the shoulder, saying, "So you are tired of winning fame, of seeking 'bubble reputation at the cannon's mouth;' come with me and you shall win riches, wealth, un-

told gold; the race of wealth never tires, it always brings satisfaction."

"But I must open this door," said the owner; "hark at the knocking."

"Time enough to open that when you return," replied the stranger; "besides you will be able to entertain him better when you are rich. Come."

And the man arose and went; very speedily he became thoroughly absorbed in his search after wealth; it became quite a fever, a passion with him; and it was very instructive to observe that the more money he gained, the more he wanted, the more he grasped at. He heaped it up in piles in his cottage, every room contained money, gold; but some of it was wet with tears, and some even red with blood, for it had been wrung from the widow and the orphan, and it had caused the death of more than one; still it was gold, gold, gold! and it was gold the man craved for, gold his eyes gloated over, gold that his fingers so eagerly clutched. He grew old and feeble in this pursuit of wealth, his flesh wasted, his skin wrinkled, his joints became stiff. And when he became too old to gather more, he retired to his cottage, to feast his eyes upon what he had already heaped together.

But one night, while, as usual, he sat counting his money, he felt a strange sensation steal over him, he

scarcely knew what it was; it was a kind of want, an inward craving, which his gold could not meet and satisfy; neither could those sheets of newspaper, and stars and crosses, which he had hung up about the room, and which told of his deeds of valour and the fame that had been heaped upon his name; neither could the recollection of those days of mirth and mad revelry, though they stood out clear before him, serve to satisfy this craving want which increased more and more.

In the midst of his despair he heard once again the knock at the front door! Had the traveller returned who had promised him rest and peace? He started from his chair, and, with head bent forward, listened to hear it once more. How solemn the silence! He heard the "click-clack, click-clack, click-clack" of the clock, and glancing involuntarily up at it, he saw it was nearly twelve o'clock! He heard the hoarse roaring of the distant sea. Distant! Why, it seemed almost at his very doors! and sounded as though it was coming nearer and nearer every moment. What could it mean? Then, too, a wind began to rise, at first like a moan, and then like a shrill wail, then it increased in volume, and tone, and violence; it beat furiously on the walls of the cottage, it rattled at the windows—oh, it was a *fearful wind!*

But through all the noise and turmoil came the clear, low knock to the listener's ear. "My lamp, my lamp, where is my lamp?" cried the man. "I must open the door!" He routed everywhere for his long-discarded lamp, but could not find it. The storm outside was increasing; in despair he rushed to the door, to throw it open and admit the supplicant. Fancy the man's agony of terror when he found he could not open the door! He was too feeble, and the door had remained too long closed; it resisted his utmost efforts.

> For the key was stiffly rusty,
> And the bolt was clogged and dusty;
> Many-fingered ivy-vine
> Sealed it fast with twist and twine;
> Weeds of years and years before
> Choke the passage of that door!

How the man tugged and pulled, how he cried, "O angels! sweep the drifts away—unbar my door!" How despair lent him energy and strength; how he shouted again and yet again, "Push, traveller, push, the door only sticks!" But there was no voice to answer, and the knocking had ceased, the applicant had gone away never to return. Too long had the door remained unbarred, it was never to open now.

While the man was still vainly trying to pull it open, and just as the clock struck twelve, a mighty

gust of wind, and a huge, fierce wave from the encroaching sea, together dashed against the cottage and swept it, man and all, away into the storm, and darkness, and night.

And there was heard a noise as of weeping and wailing!

CHAPTER VIII.

CHILDREN AND SPRING.

"Flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come."—SOLOMON'S SONG ii. 12.

HOW lovely is spring! How like a glad surprise it bursts upon the world! Who would ever think that the cold, and ice, and snow of winter covered up such surpassing loveliness? Who would ever dream that the black earth, like a casket, contained so many precious jewels of beauty as spring reveals? I wonder whether hearts and lives that appear so dark and black, have locked up within them treasures of beauty, waiting only for some genial spring-time to bring them forth into bud and blossom?

I think there is no season in the year so tender and lovely as spring. Summer is beautiful, but it is a more matured beauty, more gorgeous, more redolent of colour, a beauty getting on in years, and more stately, lacking all the tender freshness and sportive

loveliness of spring. Summer is grand, a queen fully robed; but spring is an infant princess, with her face breaking out into sunny dimples, running here and there in very lightness of heart, and strewing flowers as she runs. Yes, spring is more lovely than summer.

How tender the young leaves on the trees, and the young flowers in the garden and the field; how coy they seem, how uncertain whether to bud and blossom, or to shrink back again into their dark winter home, as though the world were strange to them, and they scarce knew what to make of it; and how some of them hide themselves away, like the little modest blue violet, as much as to say, "Yes, I have ventured to leave my winter's prison and breathe the pure spring air; but I hope I am not intruding, I will hide away, so that you need not notice me." Pretty violet, if all men and women, boys and girls, were as modest, humble, and sweet, what a happy world this would be!

Then, too, think of the blue sky with its shifting panorama of clouds! What a world for wonder and thought up there day after day, with all its amazing changes. Summer has no such fresh loveliness as spring. Let me repeat to you a musical little poem about spring and summer I once remember to have *read:*

"Spring is growing up,
Is it not a pity?
She was such a little thing,
And so very pretty!
Summer is extremely grand,
We must pay her duty
(But it is to little Spring
That she owes her beauty).

"All the buds are blown,
Trees are dark and shady
(It was Spring who dressed them, though,
Such a little lady!)
And the birds sing loud and sweet
Their enchanting hist'ries
(It was Spring who taught them, though,
Such a singing mistress!)

"From the glowing sky
Summer shines above us;
Spring was such a little dear,
But will Summer love us?
She is very beautiful,
With her grown-up blisses;
Summer we must bow before,
Spring we coaxed with kisses!

"Spring is growing up,
Leaving us so lonely;
In the place of little Spring,
We have Summer only!
Summer with her lofty airs,
And her stately paces,
In the place of little Spring,
With her childish graces!"

Did you ever think that children are very much

like spring? There is a spring-time in every life, the same as there is in every year, and childhood, boyhood, and girlhood, is that spring-time, for it has all the graces and beauties that so charm and gladden us in spring.

Why do we love spring? Because it is young. I think one of the chief charms of spring consists in its freshness, its newness, its youth. The leaves fluttering and murmuring on the trees have not had time to grow old and deepen into a dark green; they look as if just unfolded—as indeed they are—from the tender bud, and not yet grown strong and hardy. And the flowers, too, just opening their bright eyes in the world, seem actually blushing because of their own loveliness, and because they find themselves outside their own nursery door, in a world that is all strange and new to them. And the birds! see, they have not yet attained to their summer strength of wing; they cannot take very long flights, nor soar up into the blue sky as they will a few months hence. And listen! they have not yet acquired their full note of melodious song. They are so young. And the sky! it scarcely knows what to make of it; so recently has it thrown on one side its dull winter garment, that at times it seems half inclined to resume it again, the air is so chill. Yes, everything *speaks* of youth, of fresh, young life. It is such a mar-

vellous, magic change from winter and its old age and death to young fresh life, that no wonder men love it.

And is not this one of the reasons why men and women love children, because they are young, fresh to the world—just as the leaves and flowers are—without any of its dirt and dust, untouched by its care, untainted by its evil; and because they have all the charms and graces of spring, the sunny smile and rippling laughter, like the music of running brooks, the budding thought, and the half-formed note of song? Yes, we love childhood, because it is so fresh, so new, so young. Just as spring-time is like a renewal of youth to the earth, so children are like the renewal of youth to the care-worn and aged.

"It needs not wealth to gladden hearts,
Bring smiles to care-worn faces,
The tender clasp of loving arms,
And childhood's sweetest graces,
Have magic charms
No wealth can give,
To bid the sad heart
Breathe and live."

Why do we love spring? Because it is a time of growth! Growth is a law of life; that which does not grow does not live. But in spring the whole earth seems alive, and grows in beauty daily; and men and women love to watch this growing beauty; they feel pleasure in watching the gradual unfolding

of the leaf, the opening loveliness of the flower from the tiny bud and blossom; they shield their favourite plant from the chill wind, and, carefully tending it, note the progress made each day. This is one of the reasons why so many men love to have a little patch of garden ground, that they may watch the growth of flowers and plants, and have the delight of thinking they have aided them in their upward struggle, by kindly nurture and the removal of hindrances from their path. And this joy is a deeper one than that of mere possession. People who live in the hot and dusty streets of cities and towns cannot, perhaps, fully enter into the enjoyment experienced by those who live away in quiet country places, watching the gradual awakening of nature from her sleep of death into active, vigorous life—the added grace of each day's growth, how first the twigs of trees began to swell, then shoot out tiny buds, until some fine morning the trees were full of pink and white blossoms, and as lovely as a beautiful poem.

And it is because children grow in beauty day by day that they are so much loved, for every fresh indication of growth seems an additional motive for love; it may be the mere lisping of a word, the smile and crow of recognition, the first walk across the room. Yes, things as simple as these find a way to the heart of a man or woman. And who knows what

power these things have in keeping people right, in making sweet harmony in a home, in kindling kind and merciful thoughts towards others, and feeding such a flame of love, that it warms other hearts as well as those where it burns. Blessed be spring with its growing mantle of loveliness, and more blessed be beautiful childhood with its manifold graces and charms; both come fresh from the hand of the good and bountiful God, the riches of whose love are past finding out, but who sends these two lovely creations —spring and childhood—into the world to gladden the hearts of its weary men and women.

Why do we love spring? Because it is a time of promise. In spring we have the promise of a future harvest. All the snowy blossoms that cover and beautify the trees in the orchard will one day change into luscious fruit, which men will gather and store away for winter use. The millions of tiny blades shooting up in the fields will one day change into ripe, golden corn, on which the dew will fall, and the sun shine, till each field is like a billowy sea of glory, ready for the sickle and the reaper. If the spring-time is full of blossom, the harvest will be abundant. We walk into the garden and examine the budding rose, and say, "See what a promise of beauty there is here; if the bud is so lovely, what will the flower be?" We step into the orchard and say, "See that

apple-tree, how wonderfully it has blossomed, how laden the branches will be with fruit." Thus we love spring, because it promises so much for the future. We trust our seed to spring, as we do money to a bank, for we have faith in its power to nourish and increase it. He who sows not in spring will have nothing to reap in harvest; the wise man sows, believing he shall one day reap; he goes out into the fields singing:

"Now hand to seed-sheet, boys,
We step and we cast; old Time's on wing;
And would you partake of harvest's joys,
The corn must be sown in spring.

"Fall gently and still, good corn,
Lie warm in thy earthy bed;
And stand so yellow some morn,
For beast and man must be fed."

And although the seed will have seasons of trial and trouble, have a life of struggle and endeavour, it will overcome all, and in the end flourish strong and ripe in the sweet sunshine.

Yes, we love spring because it is a time of promise, and we love childhood for the same reason. The "child is father of the man;" the future worth and excellence of the man depends upon the worth of the child. Children are watched with fond, loving eyes; every little trait of disposition or temper is carefully *noted, because* one day they may become ruling and

governing principles of life. We love a boy who is open and generous in all his actions, because it is a promise of honourable manhood. We love to hear a boy impulsively willing to speak the truth in spite of all consequences, because we hope it will deepen into a heartfelt conviction that lying is mean, dishonourable, and wicked. We take pleasure in noting acts of considerate kindness for others; it is a promise that the man will be kind and unselfish, thoughtful and considerate for the welfare of those around him. We love to see a boy indulging in and cherishing lofty thoughts and high aspirations for the future, because we feel that in days to come he will work hard to realise them. And all these traits are fostered and cared for by happy parents, and many earnest prayers go up to the good God that all these promises of future worth may come to pass, and not be as the "early cloud or the morning dew, and soon pass away."

Sometimes, however, the spring months are bad, the season is one of cold and wet, and there is no promise of an abundant harvest; men's hearts are full of sad forebodings and evil prophecies. And it is just so with some children, their spring-time is bad, full of evil impulses, with no noble traits, and consequently there are many head-shakings as to their future, and many tears are wept in secret. Try, my

dear children, to make your spring-time one full of promise; recollect there is only one in a lifetime, and if that is wasted, there is no other to fall back upon; but if you make that bright by drawing down God's sweet blessings into your heart and soul, your manhood will be such as to receive His benediction, so that when your work here is done, you will be welcomed into an everlasting spring-time of joy and gladness in an eternal home.

CHAPTER IX.

LESSONS FROM THE CORNFIELD.

"Jesus went on the Sabbath-day through the corn."—
MATT. xii. 1.

N the Sabbath-day Jesus went through the cornfields." I am not surprised that Jesus loved to walk through cornfields, for He loved everything that was beautiful. And how beautiful is a cornfield, with its myriads of slender, graceful stems, each one surmounted and crowned with its coronet of fruit! What can the eye rest upon that is more lovely? In the bright freshness of the early morning it is like a waving sea of glory; for the beams of the rising sun go in and out among the ears, touching the dew-drops—with which each is adorned—with beauty, till they sparkle and glitter like diamonds, which angel hands have scattered over the field during the dark hours of night; then it is the lark wakes up, "shakes the dew-drop from its wing,"

and soars up into the blue sky, singing its morning song of praise; then, too, the wind sweeps over the field, and the corn bends as if in mute adoration to the great creator and life-giver—God. Yes, a cornfield is very beautiful; and it seems almost a pity that when it has attained its full perfection of beauty, men should go forth with the keen sickle and cut it down. Yet, pitiful as it seems, it is to this end it has grown; and the season is one of gladness—it is a time of rejoicing, for it is the time of harvest.

Now, there are many lessons which children may gather from the harvest-field; for there is a harvest-time in every life, as well as a harvest-time in every cornfield, and in both instances much has to be done before that time of gladness arrives.

For every cornfield soil must be prepared. If the soil was not prepared, the farmer might sow his seed, but he would get no crop; the seed would be wasted, the birds of the air would carry it away, or it would lie and rot, and die. The plough must go deep into the hard earth. Furrows have to be made all over the field—not once only, but many times must the plough cut its way into the black earth. But even this is not sufficient; the great hard clods which the plough has turned up must be broken and crumbled into mould; and for this purpose the heavy and sharp harrow passes over the ground, its pointed

teeth piercing the stubborn clods, and breaking them asunder.

It is so with each boy and girl; their heart-soil must be prepared ready to receive the good seed of the Divine Sower, or it will all be wasted and lost—it will meet with the same fate as that of which Jesus speaks when He says, "Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away." Yes, the soil must be prepared. And there is always something at work in each heart preparing it. Trouble comes, and care, and sorrow; and, like so many ploughs and harrows, they break up the stubborn soil of your nature, piercing and crumbling the hardness of your pride. You must not shrink from the plough or sharp harrow, but instead, earnestly cry to God:

> "Oh, break my heart; but break it as a field
> Is by the plough up-broken for the corn."

In every cornfield seed must be sown. All the labour of preparing the soil would be in vain, were no seed sown. Seed must be sown. So the farmer and his men go forth and scatter it over the field,

either with the hand or with the drill. Sometimes the sun is shining when the seed is put into the earth, or it may be that the day is dull, dark clouds hiding the blue sky, and no sun breaking through; perhaps, too, the day may not only be dull, but rain also may fall. Still the seed must be sown when the proper season comes.

The good seed also must be sown in the heart-soil of each boy and girl. There is, however, this difference between the seed sown by the farmer and the good seed. The farmer must sow his at a particular season; but the divine seed can be sown at any and every season. Yet it is sometimes sown in gladness, when the smile is on the lip and the light of laughter in the eye; and sometimes when the life is over-clouded with the dull heavy clouds of care; or when the eyes rain tears and the heart is aching with pain. Yet, in each instance, the seed should be received with joy. I cannot help thinking that the earth is always glad to welcome the seed which is put into it; at any rate it does not reject it. If so with the black earth, how much more joyfully should a boy or girl receive the seed of immortal life into their heart, from the hand of the Divine Sower.

Every cornfield contains the mystery of growth. What makes the seed grow? When the seed is *placed in the* earth it does not remain quiet, neither

is it left alone. It has impulses from within, and is acted upon from without. This little seed possesses a wonderful power. To grow up into new and beautiful life, it is necessary that it receive water, for it becomes thirsty; so, when the rain falls, making the soil damp and wet all round, it drinks up the moisture, it has the power of drawing it from the black earth; and with the water it draws and sucks in other things necessary to its growth and life. Then the beams of the sun—like so many long, golden fingers—find their way down to the little seed, which receives them with joy, until it begins to heave and swell, and a tiny white blade shoots from it, which the sunbeams draw up higher, and higher, and higher, until at length it penetrates right through its dark but warm bed, out into the fresh air and sunshine, commencing that process of which our Saviour speaks when He says, "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

Now, when the divine seed is sown in the heart of a boy or girl, the heart must be turned towards heaven, so as to receive all sweet heavenly influences, that the seed may take root and grow. The divine seed has magic powers in itself, and will draw into it what the heart receives from the skies. The seed in the earth is not left alone to perish, neither is the seed in the heart; in the one instance, the rain and

dew and sunshine impart to it life, and health, and strength; and in the other, the grace of God, the tender mercy of God, and the beautiful love of God are showered upon it, and the great Sun of righteousness shines upon it, giving to it that beautiful divine life to which no other life is for a moment comparable, but which makes the whole heart and the whole life lovely in the sight of Him who once trod this earth as a little child. But:

Every cornfield has its share of weeds. When the little green blade—the first promise of the coming harvest—has shot up from the earth, beginning to grow and flourish in the bright sunshine, there are other green blades of quite a different kind and value, which also make their appearance, growing side by side with the corn. These are called weeds. In the finest field of corn there are weeds. They spring up of themselves; the farmer has not sown them, neither does he wish them to grow, and indeed would be extremely pleased if he knew how to get rid of them. Weeds are worthless for the purpose of making corn; but, like a great many more worthless things in this world, they work a great deal of mischief. They injure the wheat, they steal away from it a great deal of the nourishment it requires, they rob it of rain, and dew, and sunshine.

And this is the case in the history of each boy and

each girl. When the good seed has struck its root in their heart, and begins to grow, and flourish in the light of God's smile, weeds spring up and try to kill it. They try to steal away its beauty and strength, and make it weak and worthless. Sometimes they succeed. The good seed becomes like that of the sower in the parable which fell among thorns: "The thorns sprang up and choked it." The weeds which spring up in a cornfield are many and various; so are those which spring up in the heart of a boy or girl. There is untruthfulness, deception, meanness, tale-bearing, evil speaking, unkind thoughts, and many others. These, if left to flourish, will choke the good seed.

When the farmer sees his field is overrun with weeds, he sets to work to root them up and destroy them, for he knows that if left to grow unmolested they reproduce themselves—they scatter their seed far and near, and work more mischief yet by threatening to lessen still more the abundance of the coming harvest.

> "How many plants—we call them weeds—
> Against our wishes grow,
> And scatter wide their various seeds,
> With all the winds that blow?"

To prevent this, he pulls them up, root and all, and casts them on one side, that they may lie and rot and

die. And this is what each boy and girl must do. They must go over that field of theirs—their heart—and pull up and destroy every weed which is found flourishing there; leave not one behind, or it will increase again and again.

The farmer pulls up the weeds when his corn is young, but a little way from the ground, and when the weeds have not taken deep root, for he knows that if he leaves them until the corn has reached a great height, he will never be able to destroy them at all. This is what you must do, pull up the weeds from your heart when they make their first appearance; do not, on the contrary, leave them until they have attained hardihood and strength, for then your work and labour will increase a thousandfold. But once more:

From every cornfield a harvest is expected. Yes, the days and weeks and months pass away; the rain and dew fall on and nourish the corn, and the sunshine ripens it, until it is ready for the reaper with his sharp sickle. How many times the harvest is mentioned in the Bible! and Jesus once said, "Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." Harvest comes in the beautiful autumn-time of the year, when the leaves on the trees are beginning to *turn brown and* sere, when lovely flowers are dying,

and birds are thinking of flying away to a warmer country. Still, harvest-time is a time of rejoicing and gladness, for the fruits of the earth are being gathered in. The farmer sees the realisation of all his toil and labour, his anxieties and hopes, as he watches his men thrust in the sickle, bind up the sheaf, or load the waggon. Harvest-time is an important time, it is the test-time of the year. In the abundance or scarcity of his harvest is the proof of the farmer's labour, and care, and vigilance. That farmer cuts a sorry figure who has sown his corn scantily, or has allowed his fields to be overrun with weeds, so that his crops are meagre and poor.

There is, as I have said, a harvest-time in the life of every boy and every girl; it will come sooner or later; it must come; it comes in every life, and must therefore come in yours; and when it comes it will be the great test-time of your life. By the abundance or the scarcity of your harvest will you be judged. Then will be seen whether you have carefully cultivated the good seed which the Divine Sower sows in each heart, or whether you have allowed noxious weeds to overrun the soil, sapping up its nourishment and life. Yes, the harvest-time must come, and with it the reaper to thrust in the sickle.

> "There is a Reaper whose name is Death,
> And with his sickle keen
> He reaps the bearded grain at a breath,
> And the flowers that grow between."

Take care and have a plentiful harvest. With what joy the farmer hails each load as it leaves the field, to be hoarded for the coming winter! and how heartily the men shout "Harvest home! harvest home!" as they pitch up the last sheaf, when the sun is just setting, it may be, or beneath the light of quiet stars! And you, my dear boys and girls, will you not strive to have a joyful harvest home? so that when the Reaper, whose name is Death, has done his work, you may hear the glad sounds of welcome from angel bands, and loud and clear above them the Great Master's voice, saying, "Enter in; well done, good and faithful servant!"

CHAPTER X.

THE CRIMSON FOUNTAIN.

"There shall be a fountain opened."—ZECH. xiii. 1.

IN the middle of a great German forest, called the Black Forest, was a village of charcoal-burners. A large piece of the forest had been felled, and its undergrowth cleared away; and in the open space thus formed, a considerable number of huts—altogether forming a pretty large village—had been erected. In these huts dwelt the charcoal-burners and their families.

At night, when darkness covered the huts and the trees of the forest, the charcoal fires made a complete circle round the village, with their bright, sparkling flames shooting and darting upwards towards the sky. To travellers who chanced to be journeying through the forest at night, the village appeared to be girdled round with a belt of fire, and apparently doomed to destruction.

The inhabitants of this village were peaceable, happy, and very contented. They were all friendly with each other. Meet with whomsoever you might, or enter into whatever hut you chose, there were the cheerful salutation, the friendly grasp of the hand, the kindly glance of the eye, and the tender, loving word falling from the lips; while each man, woman, or child the village contained, were ever ready and willing to do each other a kind action.

But this happy state of affairs did not last long; a sad and terrible change took place. Every one of the inhabitants, from the oldest man or woman to the youngest child, were smitten with a frightful disease; and a disease which appeared to be incurable, so deeply rooted it became; yet, strange to say, there were no marks upon the bodies of the inhabitants which told of the terrible malady that was destroying them. Still, from its effects, it was known to be there.

The effect of this malady was to destroy all the harmony and peace of the village, and substitute in their place discord and strife; so that, instead of love, hate reigned supreme. There were no more friendly graspings of the hand, no more kindly glances from the eye, or tender words from the lips—a man was far more ready to hurt his neighbour than to do him *a good* action. From morning to night nothing was

heard in the village but bickering, and quarrelling, and fighting; loud, angry voices, cruel and savage blows. It seemed as though a malignant spirit, some invisible spirit of plague or evil, had been envious of the happiness it saw in the village, and, in its flight through the air, had smitten all the inhabitants with a curse, that it might destroy them.

This sad state of affairs continued for a long time; it did not die out, as a fever will or a plague; it increased in intensity, and day by day grew worse and worse. Some of the inhabitants felt the wretchedness of this horrible change, and, deep down in their inmost hearts, earnestly longed to be cured of their malady, and again restored to their former happiness. Some even set about trying to effect their own cure; they became very particular in what they ate and drank, and went through daily prescribed actions, such as bending the knee, bowing their face to the dust, and raising their hands and eyes up to the heavens. But all was of no avail.

Other of the inhabitants were careless and indifferent as to their woful condition; they would not even believe they were bad; and even supposing they were, they reasoned, perhaps it would be all the same in the long run; so why disturb themselves, or fret or worry? Others, again, were so bad with this terrible disease that they became hardened as to its

consequences, and were actually glad that they were subjected to its influences.

One day a rumour spread through the village that a Great Physician was about to pay them a visit—one who had power to heal them of their malady, and restore them again to health and peace. Who it was who first spread the good news remained unknown, but many were the hearts which rejoiced to hear it, and many were the eyes which were turned expectantly to the road along which the Great Physician might come. Some of the people climbed up the highest trees which surrounded the village, to catch, if possible, a glimpse of his form, as he threaded one of the many pathways of the forest; others watched by night, that he might not pass by during the darkness; while scouts, swift runners, were sent out to bring in tidings of his approach. All the village was alive with anxiety and expectation; even the most careless and indifferent were slightly moved.

At last he came—a tall, majestic-looking man, with large luminous eyes, shining with the light of compassionate love and tenderness; a most winning smile lighted up his features; while so gentle and loving were his words, and so kindly were his actions, that even the little children followed him about, and clung to his robe, beseeching him to bless them. He *visited every* home in the village, and spoke to every

man, woman, and child, telling them that he had come for the express purpose of restoring them to health.

Many inquired in what way and by what means their cure was to be effected; and he told them that a few days' journey from their village he had opened out a wonderful fountain, crimson in colour, into the waves of which they were to plunge themselves, and to bathe in its waters; and when they came out again they would be whole, and free from all disease. But on their journey they were to be very careful, and avoid several other fountains which lay in their path —this fountain, crimson in colour, was the only one which would be powerful in healing them.

Now, when they heard this, although a little disappointed, many began to make preparations for their departure; while others, and by far the greater number, laughed at the great and good Physician, derided him, and called him an impostor, a mountebank, and many other abusive epithets, and finally stoned him with stones and drove him away from their village. And it was afterwards rumoured that some of the inhabitants combined together and slew him. Good actions are sometimes very badly rewarded in this world.

On the morning after the Good Physician had been driven from the village, a large company of villagers,

men, women, and children, issued forth in search of the wonderful fountain, all desiring to be washed free from disease.

They had not gone a day's journey into the forest before they heard the bubbling and gurgling sounds of running water; and presently the foremost of the band raised a great shout, crying, "Here is the fountain!" And there, on a beautiful open space of green sward, flowed a great fountain of water; it looked very splendid, and glittered with all the hues of the rainbow, for the bright beams of the sun touched each wave, making it alive with colour.

The more heedless and thoughtless of the seekers immediately rushed to the fountain to drink of its waters, and to plunge themselves beneath its waves, where they saw multitudes sporting themselves. Some there were who tried to restrain them, saying, "The waters of the fountain we seek are crimson in colour, and not as this." But they would not listen to wise counsel; they drank of the waters; and immediately their eyes began to sparkle, their limbs, which had before been stiff and sore, now became free from pain, and as agile as those of the mountain goat or the spotted deer, while they danced, and threw their bodies into all manner of contortions, and shouted and laughed more like mad than sane persons.

There was no getting them away. "This is the

fountain, and here we will stay; we are ill no longer; we are free from disease." So the others went on and left them behind, where, after dancing until they were tired, they fell asleep, thinking how delightful a life they were living. But when they awoke from their sleep everything seemed changed; a bitter taste was in their mouth, their limbs trembled, their eyes were dull, their heads were racked with pain, while their mysterious disease became more fully developed.

Meanwhile, the others still plodded on in their search, and in the course of their second day's wanderings came to a magnificent *golden*-coloured fountain, whose waters spouted up from the ground, and then rushed away in one mighty stream. Crowds were already gathered round this fountain, and lay on each bank of the stream, greedily drinking of the waters, some were standing in the stream itself, while others appeared to have been drowned, and were lying quite motionless beneath the golden waters.

A large number of the seekers rushed forward, and fought and struggled with those already on the banks to get a drink at the golden-coloured water, and having once succeeded in wetting their lips, were careless and indifferent to everything else. Pain, disease, and friends were alike forgotten; their one desire was to drink, drink, drink of the magic waters,

and to satisfy their craving they cared not who they pushed on one side or trampled under foot.

On and on went the weary seekers, sadly diminished in numbers, and at the end of their third day's journey, just as the sun had sunk to rest, and twilight shadows were gathering in the sky and nestling in the branches of the trees, they arrived at the ruins of an old abbey, in the midst of which a quiet fountain was flowing, the waters of which were of a sober grey colour. This fountain made very little noise, but flowed calmly and quietly along. A few persons were discovered drinking of its waters; not, however, such a throng as at the other two.

"This must be the fountain we are in search of," said several; "the sun has set, and so it has lost its crimson colour." "No, no," was the reply; "the sun cannot make a whole stream crimson. This cannot be the one." But those who had first spoken had already stooped to drink, and heard not the warning of their companions. They found the taste of the waters very delicious, and so drank deeply; but during their pauses for breath they felt the pangs of their disease gnawing away at their heart.

Again the earnest-hearted and hopeful seekers went on; and as they approached the end of their fourth day's journey their ears were gladdened by the sounds of music and singing; strains of sweet melody and

joyful songs were wafted to them through the trees. Quickening their pace, they soon found themselves at the end of the forest, and in the open country, through which rolled a mighty crimson stream; at its source where it commenced as a fountain, they saw the Good Physician standing who had visited their village. Then were their hearts glad, for they knew their search was ended.

Yes, there stood the Good Physician with outstretched hands and loving smile, and words of welcome for all who came, and whom he assisted to plunge into the crimson waters, where all found themselves freed from every trace of their dreadful disease.

CHAPTER XI.

CHILDREN AND BOOKS.

"Ye are our epistle, . . . known and read of all men."—
2 Cor. iii. 2.

THIS is the age of books! Never before were so many written or so many read as in this our day. Not only do societies, and scholars, and students possess their libraries, but each household has its little cluster of volumes; and almost every boy and girl can lay claim to a shelf-full of books as his or her own particular property, which they have either purchased themselves, or which have been given to them by friends, or won as prizes at school. Yes, this is a wonderful age for books. And what blessings books are! What bright, cheerful companions, what dear and loving friends! How they amuse us; how pleasantly they while away the *time;* how quickly they banish dulness and ill-humour

—sometimes even care, and pain, and sorrow! And if we will but listen, how wisely they speak to us, how well they counsel, how safely they guide! I have frequently thought that boys and girls somewhat resemble books in some things, and that there are many lessons they may learn from them.

Let us look at the outside of books; and especially notice that some books have the best on the outside —they are got up for show, and to attract the eye. A book may be well and handsomely bound, and yet be quite worthless. A morocco binding and gilded leaves are no proof that the inside is valuable; the covers may be good, even expensive, but the inside bad, and never able to fulfil the intention for which all books ought to be written. If you purchase such an one, you have something pretty to look at, something to fascinate and charm the eye, something to lay on the table or stand on the shelf as a kind of ornament; but you have nothing to excite the imagination or fancy, nothing to charm, or gladden and soften the heart; no word of consolation in sorrow, or encouragement in trouble and despondency; no word of counsel in difficulty, or warning in wrong-doing. All is not gold that glitters. Men do not judge of the value of a diamond by its setting, or jewels by the beauty of the case, or a picture by its

frame; neither do wise men choose a book because the covers have all the colours of the rainbow, or glitter and sparkle with gold. Do not judge a book by its outside.

Children, like books, sometimes have the best on the outside. They wear the best broadcloth and velvet, the finest silks and softest muslins; they are well and tastefully clothed from head to foot; and, altogether, their appearance is a credit to those who thus adorn them. But very often the beauty of the boy or girl ends with the fineness of their clothes; we look beneath all the finery, but can find nothing to correspond—no inward beauty clothed and hidden by the beauty of dress; all is outside show. The beauty of feature may even be added to the beauty of garment, yet still it may be only skin deep. When a boy or girl gives way to passion and anger; when they tell an untruth; when they act a lie; when they do something mean or dishonourable; when they nourish feelings of envy, malice, and revenge; when they are disobedient, perverse, undutiful; when they give pain, or inflict an injury on others—then, however well dressed they may be, they have the best on the outside, they are made up for show; their inner and real life does not correspond with their outward appearance, they seem more beautiful than they really *are*. *This* ought not to be. That which is hidden

ought to be more valuable than that which is revealed. "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" inquired our great Teacher. If you are so fortunate as to have parents who can afford to dress you well, you must strive to make your thoughts—your mind, that is—more beautiful than your clothes; you must adorn it with shapes and images of loveliness that will surpass anything, however rich it may be, with which you clothe the body.

Standing at a bookstall, or in a library, you may very often see a splendidly-bound book in close companionship with one, the covers of which are soiled and ragged, tattered and torn, from rough handling or long use. Cannot you fancy the handsomely-bound volume looking down with contempt upon its poor battered neighbour, and surprised to find itself in such close association with it? But, however surprised the elegant book may be, its poor, ragged, and despised companion may be infinitely more valuable than itself, because, in spite of its worn and tattered binding, it may contain beauties that will never perish, which no rough hands can soil or rough usage destroy—beauties that not only charm the mind, but which strengthen both heart and soul.

As it is with books, so it is with children. A well-dressed boy and girl may find themselves the close

companions, for a time, of those who are far more poorly clad; but this should be no reason, as it but too often is, why they should be regarded with dislike and contempt. The torn jacket or the tattered frock may cover a noble heart—a heart strong for duty, strong for truth, and strong for love. Did not the rich man dress in purple and fine linen, and Lazarus in rags? But which was the better man? Nay, was not Jesus himself poor, and clad in homely garments? Never aim to put the best on the outside—let the better be within. That which is without is perishable; that which is within must not be perishable too. Again:

Now let us look at the inside of books, and notice —good books are great blessings. Life is full of blessings: they come to us in all manner of shapes, in all sorts of ways, every day that we live. Some only remain with us for a short time; some abide with us longer; some come in health, others in sickness. Some come in pleasure, when the heart is light and free from care; others come in sorrow, when the heart aches and the eyes are dimmed with tears. Some come to give additional pleasure to the enjoyments of wealth, others to enable us to bear patiently the miseries of poverty. But come how or when they may, they visit us every day of our life. Books are blessings that abide with us always; in health or

sickness, in wealth or poverty, in pleasure or sorrow, they lie ever ready to hand; they do not desert us in trouble, or change when the world is all against us, and our friends have forsaken us; they are ever faithful and true. Children are blessings as well as books; at least, there are a thousand ways in which they can become so, if they will only think them out.

Why are books great blessings? They amuse. Everybody, man, woman, or child, need amusement sometimes; it is not good to be always grave and serious. The wise man said there was a time for laughter as well as a time for tears. And when you, boys and girls, know what it is to go out into the world and toil among the busy throngs for your daily bread, come in rough contact with others, be annoyed and harassed by the cares of business, and wearied by its toils, you will doubtless long for the pleasant relaxation found in amusement. There are, however, amusements which, if indulged in, will not relax and refresh, but, instead, will fever both heart and brain. A harmless, mirth-provoking book will not do this; it has quite the opposite effect—it thoroughly refreshes the mind, it banishes all the annoyances of the day; they vanish like mist before the sun, or darkness at the approach of light.

Books instruct. They are silent teachers, impart-

ing to us both knowledge and wisdom. Ignorance is not a very desirable companion or bosom friend—not a very able guide or teacher; if we follow in his dark footsteps, he will lead us into many a great danger and many a serious error. Books drive Ignorance away, and are like lamps unto our feet. Consult them whenever or wherever we may, they will always tell us something fresh, always instruct us in something we knew nothing of before; and from their wise pages we can be ever increasing our stores of knowledge. Their wisdom is inexhaustible; they are filled with more riches than a king's treasury.

Books console. There is much need of consolation in this world. It is rather a sad one, and we cannot travel far in it without the heart aching and the eyes raining tears. You may not think so now, while you are young and your hearts fresh and untouched by care; but when you know what trouble is, when you know what it is to receive a visit from tearful-eyed Sorrow, when you know what it is to lose those whom you love—as some of you do even now—then you will discover how sad a world it is, and how much you need consolation. Books will offer it to you. They have kind, soothing, loving, and hopeful words for every phase of sorrow and distress. They help to give ease to the aching heart, to dry up the mourner's

tears, and implant hope in the despairing mind, and lead up to the great fountain of all consolation—God.

Books elevate. If we use them well and wisely, they leave us better than when they found us—stronger, purer, wiser, less selfish, more generous, kinder to others, more tender, loving, and merciful in all our thoughts and actions; less concerned for the low, mean things of the world, and more eager for the high and eternal ones. Yes, you will perhaps say, books may do all these things, but children cannot. In a great measure they can; if the heart is but willing, the active brain will soon find out a way by which almost impossible things can be done. If books can amuse, so can children. Have not the pleasures of the "Children's Hour" been sung by poets? If books can instruct, so can children. Some of the wisest words ever thought, and written down for others to read, have been suggested by children; and I have known the soft caressing arms and sweet prattling voices of children help to dry up many a mourner's tear and heal many a wounded heart; while myriads of men and women are the better, the truer, and purer because of children, and can echo the words which one who loves them has sung:

"What the leaves are to the forest,
With light and air for food,
Ere their sweet and tender juices
Have been hardened into wood,—
That to the world are children;
Through them it feels the glow
Of a brighter and sunnier climate,
Than reaches the trunks below."

If, as we have seen, good books are such great blessings, it follows that children should strive to be good books. Let us now listen to what books say to us. A lady once said to a celebrated man, "Sir, I am about to write a book." "Madam," he replied, "be a book!" Children, be books! How is it possible to be a book, or, as the apostle says, "living epistles, known and read of all men?" You cannot, of course, turn into an actual book, with leaves and covers; but you can possess all the qualities or attributes which make a good book.

What are the characteristics of a good book? It tells the truth. It does not lie, utter that which is false, try to deceive by saying one thing and yet at the same time mean another, as some books do; but instead, speaks honestly and truthfully. To be like a good book, children must be truthful, honest, and sincere; strive never to tell a lie, for all lying is mean and disgraceful—a sin both to man and to God. *Doubtless you* will be frequently tempted to say that

which is false; but always do valiant battle against the temptation, remembering that to lie is not only cowardly, but sinful.

A good book is pure. Can anything be good that is impure? Certainly not. I am quite sure a book cannot; and I am equally sure a boy or girl cannot. Let your thoughts be pure, so that you may not be ashamed to utter them. Impure thoughts you have to hide away out of sight; you dare not speak them out, they would not stand the test of light. Impure thoughts are dark spots on both mind and heart; they need cleansing away that both may become clean and white. Let your prayer be, "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults, O Lord."

A good book is lovable, beautiful. All goodness is beauty, and yet beauty is something more than goodness; it is to the book what the scent is to the flower, what the song is to the bird, what the light is to the stars. It is something we can feel and appreciate, and yet not clearly define. Children can be beautiful; there are numberless ways in which they can manifest their beauty. To be generous, unselfish, self-denying, and self-sacrificing, are all ways of manifesting a beauty which is not perishable, a beauty which has its home in heart and soul, and will never die, but live eternal.

A good book has life. It can never die. The

covers and the leaves may be destroyed—burned in the fire, as thousands have been; for at one time when kings, or certain other men, did not like a book, they made the common hangman kindle a large bonfire and burn it, that all people might know it was forbidden to be read; even Bibles have thus been burnt! But the life a book contains will never perish, but live ever in the hearts of men and women. The truth it contains, the purity and the beauty, are so many indications of life. Children must have life; that is, they must have the truth of God, the tenderness of God, the mercy of God, and the love of God dwelling in their hearts, influencing their thoughts, their words, and their actions. Once more, and only once:

Do not be bad books. There are such things as bad books in the world; but you must not strive to imitate them, to be as they are. They are the very opposite of good books, for they are false, impure, ugly, and dead; so is everything that is bad. If children are bad, they will grow so too. Sin cannot be truthful, or pure, or beautiful; and it carries in itself the seeds of death, for there are seeds of death as well as seeds of life. Yet, if a boy or girl is bad, they have one power a bad book does not possess—they can repent. A bad book cannot repent! The *man who wrote it* may, but not the book; that goes

on working its evil. Yet there is this to be said, that if a boy or girl does not repent, there will come a time in their history, when, like the book, they will be unable. Think of this, boys and girls, and resolve earnestly and bravely, and by God's help, to be good books—living epistles!

CHAPTER XII.

LESSONS FROM THE SNOW.

"He saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth."—JOB xxxvii. 6.

THE good God has made nothing in vain. From everything in nature we may draw useful lessons; from trees and flowers, from mountains and forests, from seas and rivers, from rain and dew. All will become vocal and speak words of wisdom, if we will but listen. But to-day I wish to speak to you about the snow. You have all seen snow, and yet what a marvel and mystery it is! Can you watch it fall without feeling sensations of delight, and also of wonder? The fall of autumn leaves is very wonderful and affecting, but I think not so much so as the falling snow. See how the feathery, fairy flakes are whirled hither and thither by the wind.

"Oh! the snow, the beautiful snow,
How the flakes gather and laugh as they go;
Whirling about in their maddening fun,
It plays in its glee with every one—

Chasing, laughing, hurrying by,
It lights on the face and sparkles the eye;
And the dogs, with a bark and a bound,
Snap at the crystals that eddy around;
The town is alive, and its heart is aglow,
To welcome the coming of beautiful snow."

But while you have watched the falling snow, or the snow upon the ground, did you ever think of the lessons it was trying to teach? Let us for a few minutes see what those lessons are.

Consider how silently the snow falls! Who is there among you that can say he has heard it fall? No one. You may have heard the wind whirling it about, but never the flakes as they fell upon the ground, upon the housetop, or even upon yourselves. No, it does not come pattering down like the rain, but, instead, falls in silence! Sometimes in the winter, when you go to your room, and before getting into bed, you, perhaps, have lifted up a corner of the window-curtain and peeped out into the darkness to ascertain what kind of night it was, and you have seen nothing but blackness. You lie down and go to sleep, and in the morning, when you awake, you find a marvellous change has been wrought as if by enchantment. The earth, which a few hours before you left black, hard, and barren, and the trees bare and desolate of leaves, are now covered over with a mantle of pure white snow.

While you were sleeping, this wonderful change was being wrought, and wrought, too, without disturbing your slumbers, wrought in the deepest silence. If you will but consider, how wonderful this is, that so great and beautiful a change should have been done without either noise or tumult, but, instead, in deep and profound silence.

I know I have spoken to you before of silence, but in God's great kingdom of Nature this wonderful and awful silence meets us everywhere. The greatest of nature's marvels are wrought in silence: the trees, the grass, the many-coloured flowers, the rainbow-tinted precious stones of the earth are all made and grow in silence; the bee may go droning to his morning's task, but he works in silence; the little coral insect toils silently beneath the great ocean and upbuilds an island upon which men can live. Yes, silence meets us everywhere in nature, in the sky above with its hosts of stars, in the earth beneath with its hidden treasures of beauty and loveliness, and in the world around with its blooming flowers, its growing corn, and its ripening fruit. And when the great poet wrote of the various influences by which the good Lord Clifford had been educated, he did not among other things forget to mention silence; he said:

'Silence meets us everywhere in nature, . . . in its growing corn, and its ripening fruit.'—CHILDREN'S HOUR, p. 128.

"Love had he found in huts where poor men lie,
His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills!"

Yes, the silent land is the true home of the wonderful. All great pictures, all lovely poetry, all stately buildings, all marvellous and enchanting music, were conceived and grew in the silent soul, long before ever they were embodied in the canvas and the stone, or written on the page. Great thoughts and great ideas grow in silence, such thoughts and ideas as have made men famous for all ages. Noise and tumult do not produce such marvels as silence. Learn to cultivate the habit of being silent. Shallow people, vain people, love to make a noise, their tongues are constantly going. But the wise know how and when to be silent. You can hear the shallow brook tumbling along over its rocky or pebbly bed, but the deep river pursues its way in silence. Shallow natures are noisy natures, deep natures are silent. Learn to be silent! Learn to work in silence. Just as the snow falls and spreads its white mantle over the face of the earth in silence, do your work in silence, so that when you go from hence into the great "Silent Land" you may not only hear the "Well done," but may also leave behind the reputation of being one of the world's great silent workers.

Consider the beauty of the snow! "Beauty!"

I hear you say; "is there any beauty in snow? I see nothing but white flakes, some large and others small, but no marked evidences of beauty!" Still, snow-flakes are very beautiful. Their beauty, however, is not apparent at first sight, it is not by a rapid, careless glance you can discern it. All beauty is not immediately perceived, much lies hidden and demands to be sought after. Just so is it with the beauty of snow-flakes; if you wish to see it you must use a microscope, and then you will find that snow is one of the most beautiful things in nature. When duly magnified every snow-particle is a perfect realisation of beauty; and according to the degree of frost by which the snow has been produced, so is its loveliness intensified. Long hours might be spent in examination of the marvellous variety of form and shape in which these particles reveal themselves, and still not exhaust their treasury; but you would understand what is meant by those words in the book of Job, "The treasures of the snow!" It was the well-known Arctic voyager, Scoresby, who first observed these remarkable forms in snow-particles, and for some time it was supposed that they assumed these marvellous figures in the Polar regions alone, but soon after it was ascertained that this was a mistake, that instead of being confined to one part of *our globe,* wherever snow fell the particles resolved

themselves into the same exquisite forms and shapes of beauty.

Take a lesson from the snow, and learn to be beautiful; and not alone to cultivate that outward beauty of form, and feature, and expression, which the most casual observer can see—in the face, the eye, the hair, and the movement of the body—but also that inner and nobler beauty which is not apparent at first glance, which has its home in the heart, and consists of a sweet temper, a loving disposition, and high, noble principles—which reveals itself in word, and deed, and life. But this can only be done by looking up to some model more perfect, more noble than yourself, and taking that as your pattern and example. And there is One who will answer this purpose and end, whose spirit you can draw down into your heart and soul so that it shall influence your every thought, and word, and deed—nay, your very life itself. You cannot exhaust the beauty of Jesus, He is beautiful always, and beautiful everywhere; and His beauty, His loveliness, may become yours! Strive to be beautiful.

Consider how pure the snow is! Purity is another aspect of beauty, but beauty of the highest order, divine beauty! And what is so pure as the fresh-fallen snow? You cannot see it in its perfection of purity if you live in a large town or city, for no

sooner does it fall than it becomes sullied; but out in the open country, away from the smoke of town or city, you can see it in all its marvel of whiteness, in all its perfection of purity. Nothing that man can make, either in the way of linen or paper, can in any way compete with it. In Russia, where men travel in sledges over vast tracks of snow-covered country, the purity of the snow is so great, its whiteness so dazzling, that their eyes have to be protected from its glare, otherwise they would suffer from what is called "snow-blindness."

Is it possible for a boy or girl to become as pure as snow? I think so, and even more pure, or Jesus himself would not have said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!" and God is the source of all purity, and we must needs become pure to behold Him, for He turneth away His eyes from beholding evil. Yet it is by His power, and in the abundance of His compassionate love for poor, weak, erring man, that all who choose, each boy and each girl as well as each man and woman, may approach to His purity, may become pure with a purity transcending that of the snow; for that is cold and impassive, yours may be warm, glowing and instinct with life; be an added beauty and grace to life; be a charm that shall work a magical influence upon others; *whose presence* shall make what is unclean shrink

back abashed, and reveal sin in all its deformity. Learn, then, to be pure, even as Christ is pure.

Now as there are three features about the snow I wish you to resemble, viz., its silence, its beauty, and its purity, so, also, there are three other and totally different features I wish you to avoid.

Consider how cruel the snow is! Yes, with all its beauty and purity the snow is sometimes cruel. In Alpine mountains great masses of snow accumulate, fall, and bury houses and villages; men are overtaken by fierce snowstorms, and perish; they lose their way, and, overcome with weariness, lie down to rest, sleep steals upon them, and then death; and all the time the snow is spreading its white winding-sheet over them. You have, doubtless, most of you, read Wordsworth's sweet poem called "Lucy Gray; or, Solitude," and how

> "The storm came on before its time;
> She wandered up and down;
> And many a hill did Lucy climb,
> But never reached the town!"

Well, when I was a lad, about the same age as many I see here, I was one evening seated by the fire reading a charming volume of Arctic voyage and adventure. It was warm where I sat, but outside it was winter, and the snow was falling, and the wind moaning and rattling at the window as if it wanted

get in out of the cold. Suddenly I was startled by hearing the ding-dong, ding-dong, of the town-crier's bell. Down I threw my book and hurried out into the storm to learn what had brought him out on such a night. There he stood, covered with, and ankle-deep in, snow. Quite a little cluster of neighbours stood round him, breathlessly listening to the news; and sad news it was. A little girl, the daughter of a small farmer who lived about two miles from the town, was lost! She had left her school in the town early on the afternoon of the previous day, and taken her way home across the fields; since then she had been neither heard of nor seen. All Christian people were earnestly entreated to assist in the search then being made for her.

You may be sure the appeal was not in vain. Men procured lanterns and went in small companies to search for the lost little one. I quite forgot my charming book of voyages, and, boy-like, must needs attach myself to one of the several parties. And while the snow was still falling fast, field after field was hunted over, ditch after ditch examined, every suspicious-looking mound visited, while the light from the lanterns flashed here and there like so many bewildering will-o'-the-wisps. For some time all search proved futile, no traces of the child could be found. *At length, however,* we arrived at the banks of a little

river that was crossed by a single plank; and there, almost beneath the plank, and lying on the hard ice, with soft, cruel snow covering her, we found the object of our search, but quite dead! She had evidently wandered from her path, and in crossing the plank had fallen on to the ice, and then death clutched her with his cold fingers. If in her terror she had cried for help, no one had heard her but the good God who had taken her home to Himself.

"Oh! the snow it fell fast,
And blinded her eyes,
And the winds carried far
Her desolate cries;
But no one could help her; long ago
This little girl wandered out in the snow!"

Yes, the snow is sometimes very cruel. And cruelty is one of the things I wish you to avoid; shun it as you would a great evil! It is a sad thing to say, but children themselves are sometimes cruel, and appear to take delight in nothing so much as torturing poor, dumb, harmless animals, or teasing and bullying those of their companions who chance to be weaker and younger than themselves. Even while I was thinking this, I saw from my window two such boys engaged in pulling the hair of, and throwing on to the ground, a poor little lame boy. Cruel *amusements* cannot be too severely condemned. It

you are cruel when young, the probabilities are that you will be more so when men and women; then all who have any tenderness of heart, all who cherish feelings of mercy, compassion, and love, will shrink from you with loathing and disgust. If you read your history books carefully and thoughtfully you will find that the fame of some men, some kings, appear to rest solely upon their deeds of ruthless, savage cruelty —such was Nero of Rome, Peter the Cruel, and Ivan the Terrible of Russia—and their memories have been held in execration ever since. Oh, never indulge in thoughts, let alone actions, of cruelty. Cherish merciful thoughts, tender, loving, and compassionate thoughts. Is it not better to give love and receive love, than to be hated and feared for your cruelty?

"Tender spirit, dwell with me—
I myself would tender be."

Let that be your prayer, and if you are really in earnest God will answer it, and make you merciful, even as He is merciful. If you have the tender, loving spirit of Jesus influencing and regulating your thoughts, actions, and life, all will then be well.

Consider how cold the snow is! If you boys have a merry game of snow-balling, even while your bodies glow with warmth your fingers are almost numb with cold! And I have been told by sailors, that when, *in snowy weather*, they have attempted to furl the

sails, their hands have been so weak from cold that they could scarcely cling to the ropes to prevent themselves from being blown overboard. And if you read the account of Napoleon Bonaparte's disastrous retreat from Moscow, you will there learn that thousands and thousands of his poor soldiers perished from the effects of the severe cold; they died even while sitting round their watch-fires. In the Crimea what numbers of our own countrymen perished from the cold; and even in the late war between France and Prussia sentinels were found dead at their posts! Yes, snow is very cold!

Now, I do not desire that any of you children should exert so cold an influence as the snow, to be icy and frigid in your behaviour, to have no warmth of heart, no fire of earnestness, no glowing love. It is a dreadful thing to have a hard, cold heart, a heart that never feels or responds to another's woe, that never melts at a tale of distress, or is fired at another's suffering from unmerited wrong! That is a heart it would be gain to lose; for it is not the men and women who have possessed such that have felt the sorrows of their kind, that have made the world better and enriched it by their love. Better, far, far better is it to have the tender, sensitive heart, that feels keenly for others; then the eye will beam sympathy, the hand give the warm grasp, and the

tongue the kind, encouraging word. Those men make the best surgeons who possess the tender heart and the firm hand, not the cold and indifferent. Pray for the warm, loving heart; then you will be able to minister unto sorrow, alleviate pain, and make homes and lives happy.

Once more. Consider how soon the snow passes away! In town and city how soon snow loses its purity! The dirt, the smoke, the passing to and fro of men and women, soon make it impure. But this must not be so with you, my dear children; your purity must be such as will bear contact with the impure things of this world and yet remain white and stainless. To keep it so as you go on in life you must keep strict guard over it; you must take care not to cherish bad thoughts, nor harbour feelings of revenge, envy, malice, pride, and anger—all these things will stain that purity of heart which it should be your prayerful, earnest endeavour to keep clean and spotless, for it is precious in the sight of God. The purity of the snow soon passes away, that of the heart must always remain. How unclean the soiled snow appears; but far more unclean in the sight of God is the soiled heart.

After a very little time the snow not only becomes impure, it passes away altogether, and is no more *seen;* purity gone, beauty gone, everything that made

it lovely to behold, gone for ever. Will this be so with you? I hope and pray not. But instead, that what you have of purity, of beauty and goodness, may live for ever, never die. I know that in a few years all the pretty faces I am now addressing will have become wrinkled and old, and that one day ere long all will be hidden away under the daisies; but that inner and higher beauty and goodness—of which the outer is but a shadow—will never die, never melt like the snow; but instead, as the years glide on, deepen, widen, and intensify, and when the body crumbles to dust, it will enter into the true home of beauty, goodness, and purity, never again to be subjected to the evils of earth.

CHAPTER XIII.

LESSONS FROM THE CLOUDS.

"Can any understand the spreadings of the clouds?"—
JOB xxxvi. 29.

YOU see clouds every day if you look up at the sky. There they are, sailing along like ships across the sea; now gliding stately, as if blown upon by soft breezes; now hurriedly, as if driven by the unseen winds of fierce storms and tempests; now solitary, like a single ship upon unknown waters, and now in vast numbers like mighty fleets combined to hurl destruction on some daring foe. Clouds! How various they are in shape and form; there is the light cloud of early summer morning, and the golden cloud of the summer evening; the rain-cloud of spring, the black thunder-cloud of the wild storm; and the dull snow-cloud of winter—*in all their varied* and fantastic shapes.

How often clouds are spoken of in the Bible; there we read of the "glory of the Lord appearing in a cloud;" and how the great God "maketh the clouds His chariot," and "rideth upon a swift cloud;" and again, that "clouds are the dust of His feet." It was a cloud that went before the children of Israel on their weary journey across the desert; and it was a cloud that carried the Saviour up into heaven, away from the eyes of His disciples; and when the fleeting goodness of some people is to be described, the Bible finds no image so truthful as that of the "early morning cloud," that soon passes away. I suppose that wherever a piece of blue sky stretches over this earth of ours, there will clouds appear: Arctic skies have them, English skies have them; and Italian and the sunny skies of Eastern lands are not free from them; wherever sky is, there clouds visit; it is their home, the country where they sojourn, and over which they travel.

Now, just as there are clouds that overshadow our earth, and sometimes hide away the sun from our eyes, so there are clouds that overshadow each of our lives; they overshadow the life of a boy and girl just the same as that of a man or woman; no life is free from them. But to every cloud that appears in the sky there is a silver lining; and there is a silver edging to every cloud that hovers over a life.

"The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessing on your head."

Let us talk of a few of the clouds that hover over your life and mine, and learn what they can teach us.

Disappointment is a cloud. And what boy, what girl is there that has not been disappointed? In all the wide world I suppose there is not one; it is a cloud that overshadows every life. I dare say you can each call to mind some particular time, some one particular day, when you suffered what, to you, was a great disappointment. Did you never rise early in the morning, and pull the blind on one side to see what kind of day it was likely to turn out, because you were going for a drive into the country, a picnic in the woods, or a row on the river? And if you saw the blue sky and the shining sun, did not your heart, and body too, leap for joy? but if, on the contrary, you saw the sky was one mass of dark, swollen clouds, and the rain falling, did you not pull a long face, and creep back again into bed with a heavy heart, because you knew all the long anticipated pleasure was never to be realised? And did you not murmur, and say that it always *did* rain when you wanted to go out?

Or have you not, for days or weeks, and perhaps even months, built great hopes on some special visit

you were to pay, or some particular present you were to receive; and has not the visit turned out a failure, or the present never came? Men and women thought these little disappointments, little clouds, but you did not, did you? For you the whole sky, for the time being, was all cloud. And you could not make out why the disappointment came, and thought things were managed very capriciously, and that if you had the management of them, you would turn them out quite differently and far better.

Perhaps you have all had such experiences. Well, clouds that climb up into the sky do not do it for mere sport, or mere fun; they are there for a purpose; they are to do good to the earth. It is just so with the clouds that hover over each of your lives; they are there for some purpose, to do you some good. Those little clouds of childish disappointment are to prepare heart and soul for the greater and intenser disappointments which meet you when you go out into real, earnest, active life. If you never suffered a disappointment now, while children, you would probably go into the world expecting to find everything as easy and pleasant for you there. The disappointments of the boy are a hardening for the disappointments of the man. Think again:

What a cloud discipline is! You do not see the use of being made to do one thing, and not allowed

to do another; to be made to obey your father and mother, and not permitted to do just what you please yourselves. You do not see why you should be sent to school to learn lessons instead of having a good game of play or stroll in the fields; you would rather lie in bed late than get up early; and in winter you would far rather wash in warm water than cold; and you cannot see the reason in not being allowed to eat as much as you please, but only just so much as father and mother thinks good for you. In short, you do not like discipline; it is a cloud that brings many a black frown to the face, and many a tear to the eye.

But both discipline for the body and the mind are necessary, or you will cut a very poor figure in the world. It is necessary even if you want to be a good player. Fancy what a cricketer you would make if you were never to have a cricketer's training. You must learn how to handle your bat; you must learn to keep in your ground and not run out to strike at tempting "slows;" you must learn how to play both a slow ball and a quick ball; you must learn not to "sky" your balls, or you are caught out; and then you must learn how to "field" well, or you let the ball spin past you. A bat, and ball, and stumps do not make a cricketer, but the knowing how to use them; and to use them well, you must go through a *course of* training—discipline.

Books do not make a scholar; pen, ink, and paper do not make a ready writer; you must be trained how to use them. A little boy once ran away from school because learning was such hard work; he thought his master too strict with him, his discipline too severe. But wherever the boy went, whether into the hayfield, into the workshop, into the town, or into the playfield, he saw a man just like his schoolmaster superintending everything, only looking a little more severe, more frowning; so at night he ran back again and willingly submitted to his former discipline, knowing it was far more lenient and merciful than any he had seen in his day's ramble.

What would an army be without discipline? A red coat and a rifle do not make a soldier, but the discipline through which the man passes, which teaches him how to use his weapons, and how to attack his foe. What would you think of a general who was so lax in his discipline as to allow the sentinel to sleep at his post when the army was facing the enemy? You would think him mad, would you not? Death is the penalty when a sentinel sleeps at his post. Napoleon I., one night, during one of his campaigns, went the round of his sentinels to ascertain if the men were alive and alert; and he found one sentinel sound asleep. Picking up the soldier's musket, he kept guard, and

allowed the man to sleep on. But when the sleeper awoke and saw his chief standing where he should have been, he was so terrified, that he fell on his knees and begged for mercy, pleading his extreme fatigue in extenuation of his crime. Napoleon was generous enough to pardon the man, but warned him not to repeat the offence. Discipline makes the soldier.

And if you boys and girls want to be brave men and women, doing your own and God's work in the world, fighting your own and God's battles, you must subject yourselves to discipline. However hard it is to obey when your parents tell you to do one thing, or to refrain from doing another; however dark the cloud may seem to lower over your lives at such times, try and think that they know what is best for you, to make you brave, and strong, and true, to make you grow up into God-fearing men and women. Once again:

Think what a dark cloud pain is! Perhaps this brings more tears to the eye, more darkness to the heart and mind than any other cloud I can mention. Children find pain so hard to bear, they cry out and rebel against it; they dread, they shrink back from it, and cannot understand why they should suffer such dreadful agonies. This is quite natural, for the body *was never made* for the purpose of enduring a greater

or lesser amount of pain; but something has gone wrong with it, something is still wrong with it, and pain comes to set the wrong right.

There are many things that pain does. It acts like a warning; it tells us not to do some particular thing, or pain will be the consequence. If a boy or girl were so foolish as to thrust their finger into the gas-flame, or lay it on the bars of a fire-grate, it would be severely burned, and they would suffer very acute throbs of pain; but having once suffered from such folly, they would never be likely to do it a second time. I once saw a little two-year-old boy in one of our London hospitals, who, one evening, when his mother had left the room in which they lived, got out of bed and ran to the fireplace and drank some boiling water from the kettle on the hob. Of course he was terribly scalded, and the pain he suffered was very great, for his cries were most distressing to hear; but when he got well I do not suppose he would ever do such a thing again; the pain suffered would be a caution to him, it would act as a warning.

Pain purifies: it is a kind of divine medicine for the body. When the body gets out of order it is pain that points out where the disorder is; then, perhaps, we have to endure more pain before it is set right again. Perhaps one of you here have broken an arm or a leg, and know how dreadful the pain is; but the

pain, the agony becomes tenfold greater when the surgeon sets it; but the setting is necessary that the broken limb may become united again, and grow well, and strong, and sound. I once knew a little boy, he was but nine years old, who had what is called a diseased leg; it gave him very much pain, letting him have no rest night or day. One day the surgeon came with his sharp, cruel knives, and cut the leg off. The sharp agony the poor boy suffered was very great, for he was not allowed chloroform; but losing that limb checked the disease, and in time he became well and strong. You see the sharp pain was necessary.

"We shrink from the pain,
But the pain brings the good;
'Tis the torturing fever
That purges the blood."

Pain is an instrument of correction. If you do wrong you have to suffer for it. If you disobey your parents, if you do something your father and mother tell you that you ought not to do, or you must not do, you are punished for taking no heed of what was said, for wilfully disobeying them. You are corrected by pain. God punishes His children in the same way; if they do wrong they suffer for it. But when your father or mother punish you, you must never think it *is because they* do not love you; the very pain they

inflict is a proof of their love, and perhaps while inflicting it they suffer even more than you. I once saw a little baby, only three months old, a careless nurse-girl had let it fall and broken its little thigh. When I saw it the surgeon was setting the bone, and the cries of the little thing were most heartrending; but the mother held it in her arms all the time, she braced up her heart to endure the agony of her child's cries. But I am sure she suffered more than the child, for when all was over, and the little splint bound securely round the limb, she fainted right away.

If God afflicts us with pain, it is a proof that we are not forgotten, but that He cares for and remembers us; if He allowed us to live without pain, then perhaps we might have cause and occasion to cry, "Why hast Thou forsaken me, O God?"

> "The children of God
> Are the broken, despised;
> The forsaken are those
> Who live unchastised."

Pain is like a heavy rain-cloud; the rain-cloud hides the sun for a time, but it pours water upon the thirsty ground—it is full of blessing. Pain may hide the face of God from us for a time, but it is full of God's goodness; and if we listen we may even hear a voice from the cloud. Think again:

What a cloud sorrow is! You are not too young

to know what sorrow is; that visits every home and every heart, however humble the one, or young the other. There are so many things to be sorry for. You may be sorry because you have done wrong, committed a fault, because you have injured a schoolfellow, or spoken cross and spitefully to a friend; well, that is a holy sorrow. But you may have so tender a heart that you feel sorry because others do wrong, will insist upon doing what they know to be wrong, you may love your Saviour so much that this grieves you; well, this is a divine sorrow; and both the holy and divine sorrow, that settle on your heart like thick clouds, may be blessings to you. Sorrow for your own personal sin may lead you to ask for pardon, and for strength not to sin again; while sorrow for others' wrong-doing may keep your heart open to the wants of your fellow-creatures, may even make you dedicate your life to their service.

But there is more personal sorrow: you may be a lonely little boy or girl, and feel yourself uncared for, unloved; while your heart may be craving for love there is no one to give it you; it seems to be for everybody but you—you long for it, but it never comes:

> "It seems so hard to be loving,
> And not a sign to see
> But the silence, and the sweetness
> For all but me."

But it is far better to have a fountain of love in your own heart, by which you can be refreshed, than to have love poured on you; better to love than be loved.

"Better a fountain in the heart than a fountain by the way."

But your cloud of sorrow may arise because you have lost kind friends, a brother or a sister, with whom you used to play, and by whose side, at night, you used to sleep; death may have come and taken the light from the eyes, stilled the voice, and chilled the warm little body; and one day you saw it hid away in the cold, cold grave, never to see it again. Or, perhaps, it may even be a father or mother you have lost; then indeed the cloud which hovers over you is dark; but if you listen you will hear a sweet Voice coming from it, saying, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoso believeth in me shall never die." And even when your sorrow is very deep, perhaps you may recollect the cry one uttered a long, long while ago now: "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." But once more:

Think what a black cloud sin is! Sin is the thickest and blackest of all clouds, and the most terrible, for like a thunder-cloud it is charged with *fearful lightnings*. Do you know what sin is? Sin

is future punishment! If you do wrong, if you sin against God, you are putting a rod in pickle for your own back, you are treasuring up wrath; for a present, momentary gratification you are putting on one side a whole heap of misery which will overwhelm you one day. Pray earnestly to God to remove the cloud of sin from your life. You hear, and perhaps sometimes read, how the lightning strikes a tree and splits it in half, or strikes a man and kills him. The lightning of sin is even more terrible. Never, never let sin's black cloud overshadow your life. Pray the beautiful prayer Jesus taught you, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." From all other clouds you will receive blessings, but from sin's black cloud judgments.

CHAPTER XIV.

ANGELS BEHIND THE CLOUD.

"The bright light which is in the clouds."—JOB xxxvii. 21.

MANY years ago, in a little village near to a great city, dwelt two orphan children, a brother and sister. They were quite alone in the world, for though they had some one to give them food, they had no one to love them; and the absence of love makes loneliness. The whole world seemed to frown upon and regard them with suspicion, as though they had no right to live and look upon the beautiful flowers, or up at the blue skies. But the unfriendly faces around only made these poor children draw closer to each other, so that the bands of love which bound them together were strong and firm, so strong, indeed, that no human power could tear them asunder.

Now the sister was several years older than her brother, and her love for him was of that deep and

devoted character that it excluded all thoughts of self, and manifested itself in all those little protecting, motherly ways, which a sense of superior wisdom and age sometimes gives to young girls. There was no toil too hard to endure, no pain too severe to bear, no sacrifice too great for his sake. She would sit up half the night to manufacture some little toy that should be a pleasant surprise for him when he awoke in the morning. She would willingly relinquish her share of food that his hunger might be satisfied, and go scantily clothed—for they were not rich—that he might be warmly clad.

All this was very beautiful, yet the sister felt herself amply repaid with the return her brother made for all her loving care and unselfish devotion. He looked up to her with confiding trust, firmly believing that no one was comparable to her. He poured all his griefs, hopes, and joys into her willing ear; he admired and loved her with his whole heart.

The good God, in His heavenly home, smiled upon these children, for He loved them; but when He saw that all the sister's affection and love were expended upon her brother, and that her devotion to him was so great that she sometimes even forgot her God, and neglected to pray to Him, He said, "Her love is *very* precious and beautiful, but I will purify it, and *make it mine;* her brother shall come up here and

dwell with me; then, when her love is wandering here and there seeking him, it will find me." God then directed two angels—child-angels, you know—to fly down to earth and carry the child up to Him.

So early one morning, when the gates of paradise opened to let the sun bound forth on his day's journey, these two angels slipped out with it, and floating through the air, alighted upon a cloud, in the bosom of which they nestled, hiding themselves. The cloud sailed quickly along, and men and women, looking up, said, "What a black cloud!" But they knew not that angels were hiding behind! At length the cloud hovered over the cottage where the two orphan children lived, shutting out the sweet sunlight.

After the cloud had rested for a short time over the children's home, the little boy began to feel unwell—his head throbbed with pain, his blood grew hot, his cheeks flushed, and his eyes wildly bright.

Seeing all these alarming symptoms, the sister became anxious, fearing something was wrong, and she said, "Are you unwell, darling?"

But her brother made no reply, he only rested his head upon his little hand, moaning as if in pain. Then his sister took him up in her arms, and rocked him gently to and fro, murmuring all sorts of endearing words—such as love always finds ready—over him. Yet, far from growing better, he became

decidedly worse, and began to mutter and talk wildly, crying for his sister, not knowing he was resting in her arms. Thoroughly alarmed, she carried him up to their little bedroom and laid him upon his bed, and then ran for the doctor, who, when he came and saw the child, and felt his pulse, looked very grave, and shook his head in that mysteriously wise way doctors will, and promised to send him some medicine. The medicine he sent, however, seemed to have no power to arrest the disorder.

Day and night, night and day, did the poor sister watch untiringly by her brother's bedside, moistening his fevered lips, and cooling his hot brow, sometimes taking him in her arms, vainly trying to lull him to rest with simple, soothing songs, sung in a low, sweet voice. All this time sleep never visited her aching, watching eyes, while her tender heart bled because she could not ease her darling's pain.

One evening the fever left him, and he awoke in his right mind, and said, "Sister!" With a low, tremulous cry of glad surprise the sister bent down her head—for his voice was very faint—thinking that now her brother recognised her, he would soon be well again. Poor girl! she did not know how soon his voice would be for ever hushed.

"I am here, darling," she said.

"*Sister,*" he replied, while a solemn light gleamed

in his eyes, "there are two child-angels standing by the bed! Did you ask them to come?"

"Angels, darling!" Alas! she thought the fever was returning; she did not know that

"Two little angels—child-angels, you know—
Sit by the side of the boy that must die,
Smile at each other, and nod their heads so,
Singing, 'We'll fly with him up to the sky.'
Singing, 'His laugh has been merry and fleet,
Just for a moment he's suffering pain.'
Singing, 'He'll laugh to find heaven so sweet,
Never he'll care to see London again.'
Innocent child-angels flutter their wings,
Sweet is the song that a child-angel sings.

"Wild on the pillow he tosses his head.
Small angel-lips meet above him to kiss,
Singing, 'He'll kiss us as soon as he's dead;
Die, pretty boy, we are waiting for this.'
Singing, 'We'll welcome you into our band,
Teach you the manners and ways of the skies.
I'll blind your eyes, dear, *I'll* hold your hand,
Heaven shall come in a splendid surprise.'
Singing, 'You will not feel shyness or fear,
You'll be a little child-angel, too, dear!'"

The sick boy heard some such song, for he smiled; then followed a mysterious flutter; then all was still.

Shedding bitter, bitter tears, the bereaved sister kissed the little lips that would never again murmur her name. She saw the black cloud, which had continued to overshadow the cottage, float away, and on the edge was a border of silvery brightness; it was

the flashing of the angels' wings as they left the cloud, bearing their new companion to his home in the skies.

The cold, white little body was hid away in the dark ground, and the lonely sister planted flowers upon the grave, watering them with her tears. But now her brother was at home in heaven with the bright angels, and there was nothing left on earth for her to love, her heart's best affections went up to heaven too; she thought of her brother, and then she thought of the good God who was caring for him up there, and she knelt, asking Him to keep her brother safe, and love him for her sake. Believing God heard her prayer, and would do what she desired, she began to love Him, first for her brother's sake, and then for her own, for she found the more she loved Him the sweeter the love became, and the more her affections were drawn upward to the skies.

But often during those dark days when her grief was still strange, and her heart ached for the presence of the loved but lost one, she would croon to herself while working, the verse of a song she had read in some old magazine:

"As darkness and doubt
Are the gateways of heaven,
So in sorrow and pain
An insight is given.

The pillar of cloud
  In prosperity's light,
Is a pillar of flame
  In adversity's night.
Oft must we inly cry,
Lama Sabachthani,
If we would crucify,
  Trample down sense;
Oft we must inly know
Seasons of bitter woe,
Hear spirit voices low
  Calling us hence."

And more and more she grew to know the meaning of such words. Yet oftener would she sing in her low sweet voice:

"So long Thy power hath blessed me, sure it still
  Will lead me on,
O'er dale and hill, thro' storm and torrent, till
  The night is gone;
And with the morn those angel faces smile,
Which I have loved long since and lost awhile."

The dark cloud had its silver lining, the sorrow had changed to immortal gladness, for love had found its true home and object. All earthly love contains the seeds of sorrow, heavenly love alone is perfect joy.

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